

*Yet Another  
Effort,  
Frenchmen,  
If You  
Would  
Become  
Republicans*

(Being the pamphlet  
imagined purchased by  
Dolmancé in the fifth  
dialogue of Le Marquis  
de Sade's "Philosophy in  
the Boudoir")

Annotated Edition

“Yet Another Effort, Frenchmen, If You Would Become Republicans” is a pamphlet introduced in the fifth dialogue of the Marquis de Sade’s book *Philosophy in the Boudoir*. This book is now regarded as one of Sade’s major works and is presented in the context of a soiree in the boudoir of one Madame de Saint-Ange to which others are invited, not least one Monsieur Dolmancé, who are to engage one Eugénie, a fifteen year old girl, in her training along the path of libertinage (which we may imagine as a path of extreme sexual liberation from imagined constrictive social and moral ties). This particular pamphlet, in this respect, functions as a tighter political rhetoric in regard to the wider book in which it finds itself placed whilst being complete as a concise political thesis in its own right. It thus both reflects the wider thesis of *Philosophy in the Boudoir* whilst making itself politically relevant to the France of 1795 which is when it was first written. In the context of this book itself, this pamphlet is read out for the approval or disapproval of the book’s characters. (It is, of course, approved.)

My own interest in this text comes from its joining of sexual, political and philosophical interests in one text. It must immediately be admitted, of course, that its contents are most relevant to the situation in which it was first produced and with which it attempted to interact (revolutionary France after “The Terror” and post Robespierre). Nevertheless, I would argue that the philosophy the text expounds, as with its greater literary context in the book in which it is found, bears on more than just local interests. To be blunt: I argue that its themes pose questions about life in general which are worthy of thought and discussion – particularly in a context of anarchy (which eschews any government, republican or monarchical, democratic or tyrannical) which is my own primary political, philosophical and even sexual context. Seeing this to be the case, I then choose to take these questions up in an attempt to answer them for myself.

The Marquis de Sade was a well read man with a vast (and quite possibly diabolical) imagination. He spent much of his last four decades in jail yet, remarkably, given the crimes of which he was accused when free and not least in that he was of noble lineage, he survived the French Revolution, in fact writing much of what he is now most remembered for (including the text below) either during or after its onset in 1789. Knowledge of this revolution, and the circumstances which caused it, will help with understanding of the text. In particular it is useful to realise that France was, before the revolution, a monarchy comprised of three civil estates of nobility, Church and commoners. France, at the time of revolution, was under economic pressure and, naturally, the privileged did not wish to give up their privilege for the sake of the masses below them who struggled for work and bread. The Church itself wanted not just wealth but power and exercised this politically and morally. Sade, as a devout atheist, was virulently opposed to this. He would also shed his nobility once the revolution began and even rose, briefly, to some prominence amongst the revolutionaries themselves. These revolutionaries were, as may be expected, quite factional with many interests vying, throughout the 1790s, for supremacy in the French state which inevitably led to many deaths as each side gained an upper hand and consequently culled its opponents. This, among other things, eventually led to the execution of Louis XVI, the French king, and so to the creation of a republic, to a lessening of the power of both nobles (who fled) and Church, but also to the ever present threat, which we will see Sade rightly noted, that a revolution of the general citizenry could be overthrown itself at any moment. We would do well to remember this context to the text as we read it for it is very pertinent to it.

In reproducing the text of the pamphlet, I have chosen to articulate my own comments upon it which relate to a subsequent anarchistic interpretation of its ideas, theories and

beliefs after views on various statements made in the text. You will find the statements I wish to comment on highlighted in yellow and with a number in parentheses beside them thus (1). The number in parentheses will then relate to a point in my commentary which comes after the text. I do not intend to discuss every point and argument of the pamphlet but only those which make themselves of import to me. Thus, you will note that my first item of note, skimming through the text, is several pages in. This is because the opening pages basically argue for atheism, something about which I have little to say in these times, unlike Sade's own, when gods are generally regarded like a bad smell. All that said, I think it as well to begin. I reproduce the text of Sade's pamphlet in full first before then adding my commentary and interpretation afterwards.

#### YET ANOTHER EFFORT, FRENCHMEN, IF YOU WOULD BECOME REPUBLICANS

I am about to put forward some major ideas; they will be heard and pondered. If not all of them please, surely a few will; in some sort, then, I shall have contributed to the progress of our age, and shall be content. We near our goal, but haltingly: I confess that I am disturbed by the presentiment that we are on the eve of failing once again to arrive there. Is it thought that goal will be attained when at last we have been given laws? Abandon the notion; for what should we, who have no religion, do with laws? We must have a creed, a creed befitting the republican character, something far removed from ever being able to resume the worship of Rome. In this age, when we are convinced that morals must be the basis of religion, and not religion of morals, we need a body of beliefs in keeping with our customs and habits, something that would be their necessary consequence, and that could, by lifting up the spirit, maintain it perpetually at the high level of this precious liberty, which today the spirit has made its unique idol.

Well, I ask, is it thinkable that the doctrine of one of Titus' slaves, of a clumsy histrionic from Judaea, be fitting to a free and warlike nation that has just regenerated itself? No, my fellow countrymen, no; you think nothing of the sort. If, to his misfortune, the Frenchman were to entomb himself in the grave of Christianity, then on one side the priests' pride, their tyranny, their despotism, vices forever cropping up in that impure horde, on the other side the baseness, the narrowness, the platitudes of dogma and mystery of this infamous and fabulous religion, would, by blunting the fine edge of the republican spirit, rapidly put about the Frenchman's neck the yoke which his vitality but yesterday shattered.

Let us not lose sight of the fact this puerile religion was among our tyrants' best weapons: one of its key dogmas was to *render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's*. However, we have dethroned Caesar, we are no longer disposed to render him anything. Frenchmen, it would be in vain were you to suppose that your oath-taking clergy today is in any essential manner different from yesterday's non-juring clergy: there are inherent vices beyond all possibility of correction. Before ten years are out—utilizing the Christian religion, its superstitions, its prejudices—your priests, their pledges notwithstanding and though despoiled of their riches, are sure to reassert their empire over the souls they shall have undermined and captured; they shall restore the monarchy, because the power of kings has always reinforced that of the church; and your republican edifice, its foundations eaten away, shall collapse.

O you who have axes ready to hand, deal the final blow to the tree of superstition; be not content to prune its branches: uproot entirely a plant whose effects are so contagious. Well understand that your system of liberty and equality too rudely affronts

the ministers of Christ's altars for there ever to be one of them who will either adopt it in good faith or give over seeking to topple it, if he is able to recover any dominion over consciences. What priest, comparing the condition to which he has been reduced with the one he formerly enjoyed, will not do his utmost to win back both the confidence and the authority he has lost? And how many feeble and pusillanimous creatures will not speedily become again the thralls of this cunning shavepate! Why is it imagined that the nuisances which existed before cannot be revived to plague us anew? In the Christian church's infancy, were priests less ambitious than they are today? You observe how far they advanced; to what do you suppose they owed their success if not to the means religion furnished them? Well, if you do not absolutely prohibit this religion, those who preach it, having yet the same means, will soon achieve the same ends.

Then annihilate forever what may one day destroy your work. Consider that the fruit of your labours being reserved for your grandchildren only, duty and probity command that you bequeath them none of those seeds of disaster which could mean for your descendants a renewal of the chaos whence we have with so much trouble just emerged. At the present moment our prejudices are weakening; the people have already abjured the Catholic absurdities; they have already suppressed the temples, sent the relics flying, and agreed that marriage is a mere civil undertaking; the smashed confessionals serve as public meeting places; the former faithful, deserting the apostolic banquet, leave the gods of flour dough to the mice. Frenchmen, an end to your waverings: all of Europe, one hand halfway raised to the blindfold over her eyes, expects that effort by which you must snatch it from her head. Make haste: holy Rome strains every nerve to repress your vigour; hurry, lest you give Rome time to secure her grip upon the few proselytes remaining to her. Unspareingly and recklessly smite off her proud and trembling head;

and before two months the tree of liberty, overshadowing the wreckage of Peter's Chair, will soar victoriously above all the contemptible Christian vestiges and idols raised with such effrontery over the ashes of Cato and Brutus.

Frenchmen, I repeat it to you: Europe awaits her deliverance from sceptre and censer alike. Know well that you cannot possibly liberate her from royal tyranny without at the same time breaking for her the fetters of religious superstition: the shackles of the one are too intimately linked to those of the other; let one of the two survive, and you cannot avoid falling subject to the other you have left intact. It is no longer before the knees of either an imaginary being or a vile impostor a republican must prostrate himself; his only gods must now be courage and liberty. Rome disappeared immediately Christianity was preached there, and France is doomed if she continues to revere it.

Let the absurd dogmas, the appalling mysteries, the impossible morality of this disgusting religion be examined with attention, and it will be seen whether it befits a republic. Do you honestly believe I would allow myself to be dominated by the opinion of a man I had just seen kneeling before the idiot priest of Jesus? No; certainly not! That eternally base fellow will eternally adhere, by dint of the baseness of his attitudes, to the atrocities of the *ancien régime*; as of the moment he were able to submit to the stupidities of a religion as abject as the one we are mad enough to acknowledge, he is no longer competent to dictate laws or transmit learning to me; I no longer see him as other than a slave to prejudice and superstition.

To convince ourselves, we have but to cast our eyes upon the handful of individuals who remain attached to our fathers' insensate worship: we will see whether they are not all

irreconcilable enemies of the present system, we will see whether it is not amongst their numbers that all of that justly condemned caste of royalists and aristocrats is included. Let the slave of a crowned brigand grovel, if he pleases, at the feet of a plaster image; such an object is ready made for his soul of mud. He who can serve kings must adore gods; but we, Frenchmen, but we, my fellow countrymen, we, rather than once more crawl beneath such contemptible traces, we would die a thousand times over rather than abase ourselves anew! Since we believe a cult necessary, let us imitate the Romans: actions, passions, heroes—those were the objects of their respect. Idols of this sort elevated the soul, electrified it, and more: they communicated to the spirit the virtues of the respected being. Minerva's devotee coveted wisdom. Courage found its abode in his heart who worshipped Mars. Not a single one of that great people's gods was deprived of energy; all of them infused into the spirit of him who venerated them the fire with which they were themselves ablaze; and each Roman hoped someday to be himself worshipped, each aspired to become as great at least as the deity he took for a model. But what, on the contrary, do we find in Christianity's futile gods? What, I want to know, what does this idiot's religion offer you? (A careful inspection of this religion will reveal to anyone that the impieties with which it is filled come in part from the Jews' ferocity and innocence, and in part from the indifference and confusion of the Gentiles; instead of appropriating what was good in what the ancient peoples had to offer, the Christians seem only to have formed their doctrine from a mixture of the vices they found everywhere.) Does the grubby Nazarene fraud inspire any great thoughts in you? His foul, nay repellent mother, the shameless Mary—does she excite any virtues? And do you discover in the saints who garnish the Christian Elysium, any example of greatness, of either heroism or virtue? So alien to lofty conceptions is this miserable belief, that no artist can employ its attributes in the monuments he raises; even in Rome itself, most of

the embellishments of the papal palaces have their origins in paganism, and as long as this world shall continue, paganism alone will arouse the verve of great men.

Shall we find more motifs of grandeur in pure theism? Will acceptance of a chimera infuse into men's minds the high degree of energy essential to republican virtues, and move men to cherish and practice them? Let us imagine nothing of the kind; we have bid farewell to that phantom and, at the present time, atheism is the one doctrine of all those prone to reason. As we gradually proceeded to our enlightenment, we came more and more to feel that, motion being inherent in matter, the prime mover existed only as an illusion, and that all that exists essentially having to be in motion, the motor was useless; we sensed that this chimerical divinity, prudently invented by the earliest legislators, was, in their hands, simply one more means to enthrall us, and that, reserving unto themselves the right to make the phantom speak, they knew very well how to get him to say nothing but what would shore up the preposterous laws whereby they declared they served us. Lycurgus, Numa, Moses, Jesus Christ, Mohammed, all these great rogues, all these great thought-tyrants, knew how to associate the divinities they fabricated with their own boundless ambition; and, certain of captivating the people with the sanction of those gods, they were always studious, as everyone knows, either to consult them exclusively about, or to make them exclusively respond to, what they thought likely to serve their own interests.

Therefore, today let us equally despise both that empty god impostors have celebrated, and all the farce of religious subtleties surrounding a ridiculous belief: it is no longer with this bauble that free men are to be amused. Let the total extermination of cults and denominations therefore enter into the principles we broadcast throughout all Europe.

Let us not be content with breaking sceptres; we will pulverize the idols forever: there is never more than a single step from superstition to royalism. (Inspect the history of every race: never will you find one of them changing the government it has for a monarchical system, save by reason of the brutalization or the superstition that grips them; you will see kings always upholding religion, and religion sanctifying kings. One knows the story of the steward and the cook: *Hand me the pepper; I'll pass you the butter.* Wretched mortals! are you then destined forever to resemble these two rascals' master?) Does anyone doubt it? Then let him understand once and for all, that in every age one of the primary concerns of kings has been to maintain the dominant religion as one of the political bases that best sustains the throne. But, since it is shattered, that throne, and since it is, happily, shattered for all time, let us have not the slightest qualm about also demolishing the thing that supplied its plinth.

Yes, citizens, religion is incompatible with the libertarian system; you have sensed as much. Never will a free man stoop to Christianity's gods; never will its dogmas, its rites, its mysteries, or its morals suit a republican. One more effort; since you labour to destroy all the old foundations, do not permit one of them to survive, for let but one endure, 'tis enough, the rest will be restored. And how much more certain of their revival must we not be if the one you tolerate is positively the source and cradle of all the others! Let us give over thinking religion can be useful to man; once good laws are decreed unto us, we will be able to dispense with religion. But, they assure us, the people stand in need of one; it amuses them, they are soothed by it. Fine! Then, if that be the case, give us a religion proper to free men; give us the gods of paganism. We shall willingly worship Jupiter, Hercules, Pallas; but we have no use for a dimensionless god who nevertheless fills everything with his immensity, an omnipotent god who never

achieves what he wills, a supremely good being who creates malcontents only, a friend of order in whose government everything is in turmoil. No, we want no more of a god who is at loggerheads with Nature, who is the father of confusion, who moves man at the moment man abandons himself to horrors; such a god makes us quiver with indignation, and we consign him forever to the oblivion whence the infamous Robespierre wished to call him forth. (All religions are agreed in exalting the divinity's wisdom and power; but as soon as they expose his conduct, we find nothing but imprudence, weakness, and folly. God, they say, created the world for himself, and up until the present time his efforts to make it honour him have proven unsuccessful; God created us to worship him, and our days are spent mocking him! Unfortunate fellow, that God!)

Frenchmen, in the stead of that unworthy phantom, we will substitute the imposing simulacra that rendered Rome mistress of the earth; let us treat every Christian image as we have the tokens of monarchy. There where once tyrants sat we have mounted emblems of liberty; in like manner we will place effigies of great men on the pedestals once occupied by statues of the knaves Christianity adored. (We are only speaking here of those great men whose reputation has been for a long while secure.)

Let us cease to entertain doubts as to the effect of atheism in the country: have not the peasants felt the necessity of the annihilation of the Catholic cult, so contradictory to the true principles of freedom? Have they not watched undaunted, and without sorrow or pain, their altars and presbyteries battered to bits? Ah! rest assured, they will renounce their ridiculous god in the same way. The statues of Mars, of Minerva, and of Liberty will be set up in the most conspicuous places in the villages; holidays will be

celebrated there every year; the prize will be decreed to the worthiest citizen. At the entrance to a secluded wood, Venus, Hymen, and Love, erected beneath a rustic temple, will receive lovers' homages; there, by the hand of the Graces, Beauty will crown Constancy. More than mere loving will be required in order to pose one's candidacy for the tiara; it will be necessary to have merited love. Heroism, capabilities, humaneness, largeness of spirit, a proven civism—those are the credentials the lover shall be obliged to present at his mistress' feet, and they will be of far greater value than the titles of birth and wealth a fool's pride used to require. Some virtues at least will be born of this worship, whereas nothing but crimes come of that other we had the weakness to profess. This worship will ally itself to the liberty we serve; it will animate, nourish, inflame liberty, whereas theism is in its essence and in its nature the most deadly enemy of the liberty we adore.

Was a drop of blood spilled when the pagan idols were destroyed under the Eastern Empire? The revolution, prepared by the stupidity of a people become slaves again, was accomplished without the slightest hindrance or outcry. Why do we dread the work of philosophy as more painful than that of despotism? It is only the priests who still hold the people, whom you hesitate to enlighten, captive at the feet of their imaginary god: take the priests from the people, and the veil will fall away naturally. Be persuaded that these people, a good deal wiser than you suppose them, once rid of tyranny's irons, will soon also be rid of superstition's. You are afraid of the people unrestrained—how ridiculous! Ah, believe me, citizens, the man not to be checked by the material sword of justice will hardly be halted by the moral fear of hell's torments, at which he has laughed since childhood; in a word, many crimes have been committed as a consequence of your theism, but never has it prevented a single one.

If it is true that passions blind, that their effect is to cloud our eyes to dangers that surround us, how may we suppose that those dangers which are remote, such as the punishments announced by your god, can successfully dispel the cloud not even the blade of the law itself, constantly suspended above the passions, is able to penetrate? If then it is patently clear that this supplementary check imposed by the idea of a god becomes useless, if it is demonstrated that by its other effects it is dangerous, then I wish to know, to what use can it be put, and from what motives should we lend our support in order to prolong its existence?

Is someone about to tell me that we are not yet mature enough to consolidate our revolution in so brilliant a manner? Ah, my fellow citizens, the road we took in 1789 has been much more difficult than the one still ahead of us, and we have little yet to do to conquer the opinion we have been harrying since the time of the overwhelming of the Bastille. Let us firmly believe that a people wise enough and brave enough to drag an impudent monarch from the heights of grandeur to the foot of the scaffold, a people that, in these last few years, has been able to vanquish so many prejudices and sweep away so many ridiculous impediments, will be sufficiently wise and brave to terminate the affair and in the interests of the republic's well-being, abolish a mere phantom after having successfully beheaded a real king.

Frenchmen, only strike the initial blows; your State education will then see to the rest. Get promptly to the task of training the youth, it must be amongst your most important concerns; above all, build their education upon a sound ethical basis, the ethical basis that was so neglected in your religious education. Rather than fatigue your children's young organs with deific stupidities, replace them with excellent social principles;

instead of teaching them futile prayers which, by the time they are sixteen, they will glory in having forgotten, let them be instructed in their duties toward society; train them to cherish the virtues you scarcely ever mentioned in former times and which, without your religious fables, are sufficient for their individual happiness; make them sense that this happiness consists in rendering others as fortunate as we desire to be ourselves. If you repose these truths upon Christian chimeras, as you so foolishly used to do, scarcely will your pupils have detected the absurd futility of its foundations than they will overthrow the entire edifice, and they will become bandits for the simple reason they believe the religion they have toppled forbids them to be bandits.

On the other hand, if you make them sense the necessity of virtue, uniquely because their happiness depends upon it, egoism will turn them into honest people, and this law which dictates their behavior to men will always be the surest, the soundest of all. Let there then be the most scrupulous care taken to avoid mixing religious fantasies into this State education. Never lose sight of the fact it is free men we wish to form, not the wretched worshippers of a god. Let a simple philosopher introduce these new pupils to the inscrutable but wonderful sublimities of Nature; let him prove to them that awareness of a god, often highly dangerous to men, never contributed to their happiness, and that they will not be happier for acknowledging as a cause of what they do not understand, something they well understand even less; that it is far less essential to inquire into the workings of Nature than to enjoy her and obey her laws; that these laws are as wise as they are simple; that they are written in the hearts of all men; and that it is but necessary to interrogate that heart to discern its impulse. If they wish absolutely that you speak to them of a creator, answer that things always having been what now they are, never having had a beginning and never going to have an end, it thus

becomes as useless as impossible for man to be able to trace things back to an imaginary origin which would explain nothing and do not a jot of good. Tell them that men are incapable of obtaining true notions of a being who does not make his influence felt on one of our senses.

All our ideas are representations of objects that strike us: what is to represent to us the idea of a god, who is plainly an idea without object? Is not such an idea, you will add when talking to them, quite as impossible as effects without causes? Is an idea without prototype anything other than an hallucination? Some scholars, you will continue, assure us that the idea of a god is innate, and that mortals already have this idea when in their mothers' bellies. But, you will remark, that is false; every principle is a judgment, every judgment the outcome of experience, and experience is only acquired by the exercise of the senses; whence it follows that religious principles bear upon nothing whatever and are not in the slightest innate. How, you will go on, how have they been able to convince rational beings that the thing most difficult to understand is the most vital to them? It is that mankind has been terrorized; it is that when one is afraid one ceases to reason; it is, above all, that we have been advised to mistrust reason and defy it; and that, when the brain is disturbed, one believes anything and examines nothing. Ignorance and fear, you will repeat to them, ignorance and fear—those are the twin bases of every religion.

Man's uncertainty with respect to his god is, precisely, the cause for his attachment to his religion. Man's fear in dark places is as much physical as moral; fear becomes habitual in him, and is changed into need: he would believe he were lacking something even were he to have nothing more to hope for or dread. Next, return to the utilitarian value of morals: apropos of this vast subject, give them many more examples than lessons, many

more demonstrations than books, and you will make good citizens of them: you will turn them into fine warriors, fine fathers, fine husbands: you will fashion men that much more devoted to their country's liberty, whose minds will be forever immune to servility, forever hostile to servitude, whose genius will never be troubled by any religious terror. And then true patriotism will shine in every spirit, and will reign there in all its force and purity, because it will become the sovereign sentiment there, and no alien notion will dilute or cool its energy; then your second generation will be sure, reliable, and your own work, consolidated by it, will go on to become the law of the universe. But if, through fear or faintheartedness, these counsels are ignored, if the foundations of the edifice we thought we destroyed are left intact, what then will happen? They will rebuild upon these foundations, and will set thereupon the same *colossi*, with this difference, and it will be a cruel one: the new structures will be cemented with such strength that neither your generation nor ensuing ones will avail against them.

Let there be no doubt of it: religions are the cradles of despotism: the foremost amongst all the despots was a priest: the first king and the first emperor of Rome, Numa and Augustus, associated themselves, the one and the other, with the sacerdotal; Constantine and Clovis were rather abbots than sovereigns; Heliogabalus was priest of the sun. At all times, in every century, every age, there has been such a connection between despotism and religion that it is infinitely apparent and demonstrated a thousand times over, that in destroying one, the other must be undermined, for the simple reason that the first will always put the law into the service of the second. I do not, however, propose either massacres or expulsions. Such dreadful things have no place in the enlightened mind. No, do not assassinate at all, do not expel at all; these are royal atrocities, or the brigands' who imitate kings; it is not at all by acting as they that

you will force men to look with horror upon them who practiced those crimes. Let us reserve the employment of force for the idols; ridicule alone will suffice for those who serve them: Julian's sarcasm wrought greater damage to Christianity than all Nero's tortures. Yes, we shall destroy for all time any notion of a god, and make soldiers of his priests; a few of them are already; let them keep to this trade, soldiering, so worthy of a republican; but let them give us no more of their chimerical being nor of his nonsense-filled religion, the single object of our scorn.

Let us condemn the first of those blessed charlatans who comes to us to say a few more words either of god or of religion, let us condemn him to be jeered at, ridiculed, covered with filth in all the public squares and marketplaces in France's largest cities: imprisonment for life will be the reward of whosoever falls a second time into the same error. Let the most insulting blasphemy, the most atheistic works next be fully and openly authorized, in order to complete the extirpation from the human heart and memory of those appalling pastimes of our childhood; let there be put in circulation the writings most capable of finally illuminating the Europeans upon a matter so important, and let a considerable prize, to be bestowed by the Nation, be awarded to him who, having said and demonstrated everything upon this score, will leave to his countrymen no more than a scythe to mow the land clean of all those phantoms, and a steady heart to hate them. In six months, the whole will be done; your infamous god will be as naught, and all that without ceasing to be just, jealous of the esteem of others without ceasing to be honest men; for it will have been sensed that the real friend of his country must in no way be led about by chimeras, as is the slave of kings; that it is not, in a word, either the frivolous hope of a better world nor fear of the greatest ills Nature sends us that must lead a republican, whose only guide is virtue and whose one restraint is conscience.

## MANNERS

After having made it clear that theism is in no wise suitable to a republican government, it seems to me necessary to prove that French manners are equally unsuitable to it. This article is the more crucial, for the laws to be promulgated will issue from manners, and will mirror them. (1)

Frenchmen, you are too intelligent to fail to sense that new government will require new manners. That the citizens of a free State conduct themselves like a despotic king's slaves is unthinkable: the differences of their interests, of their duties, of their relations amongst one another essentially determine an entirely different manner of behaving in the world; a crowd of minor faults and of little social indelicacies, thought of as very fundamental indeed under the rule of kings whose expectations rose in keeping with the need they felt to impose curbs in order to appear respectable and unapproachable to their subjects, are due to become as nothing with us; other crimes with which we are acquainted under the names of regicide and sacrilege, in a system where kings and religion will be unknown, in the same way must be annihilated in a republican State. In according freedom of conscience and of the press, consider, citizens—for it is practically the same thing—whether freedom of action must not be granted too: excepting direct clashes with the underlying principles of government, there remain to you it is impossible to say how many fewer crimes to punish, because in fact there are very few criminal actions in a society whose foundations are liberty and equality. (2) Matters well weighed and things closely inspected, only that is really criminal which rejects the law; for Nature, equally dictating vices and virtues to us, in reason of our constitution, yet more philosophically, in reason of the need Nature has of the one and the other, what

she inspires in us would become a very reliable gauge by which to adjust exactly what is good and bad. But, the better to develop my thoughts upon so important a question, we will classify the different acts in man's life that until the present it has pleased us to call criminal, and we will next square them to the true obligations of a republican.

In every age, the duties of man have been considered under the following three categories:

1. Those his conscience and his credulity impose upon him, with what regards a supreme being;
2. Those he is obliged to fulfill toward his brethren;
3. Finally, those that relate only to himself.

The certainty in which we must be that no god meddles in our affairs and that, as necessary creatures of Nature, like plants and animals, we are here because it would be impossible for us not to be—, this unshakable certainty, it is clear enough, at one stroke erases the first group of duties, those, I wish to say, toward the divinity to which we erroneously believe ourselves beholden; and with them vanish all religious crimes, all those comprehended under the indefinite names of impiety, sacrilege, blasphemy, atheism, etc., all those, in brief, which Athens so unjustly punished in Alcibiades, and France in the unfortunate Labarre. If there is anything extravagant in this world it is to see men, in whom only shallowness of mind and poverty of ideas give rise to a notion of god and to what this god expects of them, nevertheless wish to determine what pleases

and what angers their imagination's ridiculous phantom. It would hence not be merely to tolerate indifferently each of the cults that I should like to see us limit ourselves; I should like there to be perfect freedom to deride them all; I should like men, gathered in no matter what temple to invoke the eternal who wears their image, to be seen as so many comics in a theatre, at whose antics everyone may go to laugh.

Regarded in any other light, religions become serious, and then important once again; they will soon stir up and patronize opinions, and no sooner will people fall to disputing over religions than some will be beaten into favouring religions. (Each nation declares its religion the best of all and relies, to persuade one of it, upon an endless number of proofs not only in disagreement with one another, but nearly all contradictory. In our profound ignorance, what is the one which may please god, supposing now that there is a god? We should, if we are wise, either protect them all and equally, or proscribe them all in the same way; well, to proscribe them is certainly the surer, since we have the moral assurance that all are mummeries, no one of which can be more pleasing than another to a god who does not exist.) Equality once wrecked by the preference or protection tendered one of them, the government will soon disappear, and out of the reconstituted theocracy the aristocracy will be reborn in a trice. I cannot repeat it to you too often: no more gods, Frenchmen, no more gods, lest under their fatal influence you wish to be plunged back into all the horrors of despotism; but it is only by jeering that you will destroy them; all the dangers they bring in their wake will instantly be revived *en masse* if you pamper or ascribe any consequence to them. Carried away by anger, you overthrow their idols? Not for a minute; have a bit of sport with them, and they will crumble to bits; once withered, the opinion will collapse of its own accord.

I trust I have said enough to make plain that no laws ought to be decreed against religious crimes, for that which offends an illusion offends nothing, and it would be the height of inconsistency to punish those who outrage or who despise a creed or a cult whose priority to all others is established by no evidence whatsoever. No, that would necessarily be to exhibit a partiality and, consequently, to influence the scales of equality, that foremost law of your new government.

We move on to the second class of man's duties, those which bind him to his fellows; this is of all the classes the most extensive.

Excessively vague upon man's relations with his brothers, Christian morals propose bases so filled with sophistries that we are completely unable to accept them, since, if one is pleased to erect principles, one ought scrupulously to guard against founding them upon sophistries. This absurd morality tells us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Assuredly, nothing would be more sublime were it ever possible for what is false to be beautiful. The point is not at all to love one's brethren as oneself, since that is in defiance of all the laws of Nature, and since hers is the sole voice which must direct all the actions in our life; it is only a question of loving others as brothers, as friends given us by Nature, (3) and with whom we should be able to live much better in a republican State, wherein the disappearance of distances must necessarily tighten the bonds.

May humanity, fraternity, benevolence prescribe our reciprocal obligations, and let us individually fulfill them with the simple degree of energy Nature has given us to this end; let us do so without blaming, and above all without punishing, those who, of chillier temper or more acrimonious humour, do not notice in these yet very touching social ties

all the sweetness and gentleness others discover therein; for, it will be agreed, to seek to impose universal laws would be a palpable absurdity: such a proceeding would be as ridiculous as that of the general who would have all his soldiers dressed in a uniform of the same size; **it is a terrible injustice to require that men of unlike character all be ruled by the same law: what is good for one is not at all good for another.** (3)

That we cannot devise as many laws as there are men must be admitted; but the laws can be lenient, and so few in number, that all men, of whatever character, can easily observe them. Furthermore, I would demand that this small number of laws be of such a sort as to be adaptable to all the various characters; they who formulate the code should follow the principle of applying more or less, according to the person in question. It has been pointed out that there are certain virtues whose practice is impossible for certain men, just as there are certain remedies which do not agree with certain constitutions. Now, would it not be to carry your injustice beyond all limits were you to send the law to strike the man incapable of bowing to the law? Would your iniquity be any less here than in a case where you sought to force the blind to distinguish amongst colours?

From these first principles there follows, one feels, the necessity to make flexible, mild laws and especially to get rid forever of the atrocity of capital punishment, because the law which attempts a man's life is impractical, unjust, inadmissible. Not, and it will be clarified in the sequel, that we lack an infinite number of cases where, without offence to Nature (and this I shall demonstrate), men have freely taken one another's lives, simply exercising a prerogative received from their common mother; but it is impossible for the law to obtain the same privileges, since the law, cold and impersonal, is a total stranger to the passions which are able to justify in man the cruel act of murder. Man

receives his impressions from Nature, who is able to forgive him this act; the law, on the contrary, always opposed as it is to Nature and receiving nothing from her, cannot be authorized to permit itself the same extravagances: not having the same motives, the law cannot have the same rights. Those are wise and delicate distinctions which escape many people, because very few of them reflect; but they will be grasped and retained by the instructed to whom I recommend them, and will, I hope, exert some influence upon the new code being readied for us.

The second reason why the death penalty must be done away with is that it has never repressed crime; for crime is every day committed at the foot of the scaffold. This punishment is to be got rid of, in a word, because it would be difficult to conceive of a poorer calculation than this, by which a man is put to death for having killed another: under the present arrangement the obvious result is not one man the less but, of a sudden, two; such arithmetic is in use only amongst headsmen and fools. However all that may be, the injuries we can work against our brothers may be reduced to four types: *calumny*; *theft*; the crimes which, caused by *impurity*, may in a disagreeable sense affect others; and *murder*.

All these were acts considered of the highest importance under the monarchy; but are they quite so serious in a republican State? That is what we are going to analyse with the aid of philosophy's torch, for by its light alone may such an inquiry be undertaken. Let no one tax me with being a dangerous innovator; let no one say that by my writings I seek to blunt the remorse in evildoers' hearts, that my humane ethics are wicked because they augment those same evildoers' penchant for crime. I wish formally to certify here and now, that I have none of these perverse intentions; I set forth the ideas which, since the

age when I first began to reason, have identified themselves in me, and to whose expression and realization the infamous despotism of tyrants has been opposed for uncounted centuries. So much the worse for those susceptible to corruption by any idea; so much the worse for them who fasten upon naught but the harmful in philosophic opinions, who are likely to be corrupted by everything. Who knows? They may have been poisoned by reading Seneca and Charron. It is not to them I speak; I address myself only to people capable of hearing me out, and they will read me without any danger.

It is with utmost candour I confess that I have never considered calumny an evil, and especially in a government like our own, under which all of us, bound closer together, nearer one to the other, obviously have a greater interest in becoming acquainted with one another. Either one or the other: calumny attaches to a truly evil man, or it falls upon a virtuous creature. It will be agreed that, in the first case, it makes little difference if one imputes a little more evil to a man known for having done a great deal of it; perhaps indeed the evil which does not exist will bring to light evil which does, and there you have him, the malefactor, more fully exposed than ever before.

We will suppose now that an unwholesome influence reigns over Hannover, but that in repairing to that city where the air is insalubrious, I risk little worse than a bout of fever; may I reproach the man who, to prevent me from going to Hannover, tells me that one perishes upon arriving there? No, surely not; for, by using a great evil to frighten me, he spared me a lesser one.

If, on the contrary, a virtuous man is calumniated, let him not be alarmed; he need but exhibit himself, and all the calumniator's venom will soon be turned back upon the latter.

For such a person, calumny is merely a test of purity whence his virtue emerges more resplendent than ever. As a matter of fact, his individual ordeal may profit the cause of virtue in the republic, and add to its sum; for this virtuous and sensitive man, stung by the injustice done him, will apply himself to the cultivation of still greater virtue; he will want to overcome this calumny from which he thought himself sheltered, and his splendid actions will acquire a correspondingly greater degree of energy. Thus, in the first instance, the calumniator produces quite favourable results by inflating the vices of the dangerous object of his attacks; in the second, the results achieved are excellent, for virtue is obliged to offer itself to us entire.

Well now, I am at a loss to know for what reason the calumniator deserves your fear, especially under a regime where it is essential to identify the wicked, and to augment the energy of the good. Let us hence very carefully avoid any declarations prejudicial to calumny; we will consider it both a lantern and a stimulant, and in either case something highly useful. The legislator, all of whose ideas must be as large as the work he undertakes is great, must never be concerned with the effect of that crime which strikes only the individual. It is the general, overall effect he must study; and when in this manner he observes the effects calumny produces, I defy him to find anything punishable in it. I defy him to find any shadow or hint of justice in the law that would punish it; our legislator becomes the man of greatest justice and integrity if, on the contrary, he encourages and rewards it.

Theft is the second of the moral offences whose examination we proposed. If we glance at the history of ancient times, we will see theft permitted, nay, recompensed in all the Greek republics; Sparta and Lacedaemon openly favoured it; several other peoples

regarded it as a virtue in a warrior; it is certain that stealing nourishes courage, strength, skill, tact, in a word, all the virtues useful to a republican system and consequently to our own. Lay partiality aside, and answer me: is theft, whose effect is to distribute wealth more evenly, to be branded as a wrong in our day, under our government which aims at equality? Plainly, the answer is no: it furthers equality and, what is more, renders more difficult the conservation of property. (4) There was once a people who punished not the thief but him who allowed himself to be robbed, in order to teach him to care for his property. This brings us to reflections of a broader scope.

God forbid that I should here wish to assail the pledge to respect property the Nation has just given; but will I be permitted some remarks upon the injustice of this pledge? What is the spirit of the vow taken by all a nation's individuals? Is it not to maintain a perfect equality amongst citizens, to subject them all equally to the law protecting the possessions of all? Well, I ask you now whether that law is truly just which orders the man who has nothing to respect another who has everything? What are the elements of the social contract? Does it not consist in one's yielding a little of his freedom and of his wealth in order to assure and sustain the preservation of each?

Upon those foundations all the laws repose; they justify the punishments inflicted upon him who abuses his liberty; in the same way, they authorize the imposition of conditions; these latter prevent a citizen from protesting when these things are demanded of him, because he knows that by means of what he gives, the rest of what he has is safeguarded for him; but, once again, by what right will he who has nothing be enchained by an agreement which protects only him who has everything? If, by your pledge, you perform an act of equity in protecting the property of the rich, do you not

commit one of unfairness in requiring this pledge of the owner who owns nothing? What advantage does the latter derive from your pledge? and how can you expect him to swear to something exclusively beneficial to someone who, through his wealth, differs so greatly from him? Certainly, nothing is more unjust: **an oath must have an equal effect upon all the individuals who pronounce it; that it bind him who has no interest in its maintenance is impossible, because it would no longer be a pact amongst free men; it would be the weapon of the strong against the weak, against whom the latter would have to be in incessant revolt.** (4) Well, such, exactly, is the situation created by the pledge to respect property the Nation has just required all the citizens to subscribe to under oath; by it only the rich enchain the poor, the rich alone benefit from a bargain into which the poor man enters so thoughtlessly, failing to see that through this oath wrung from his good faith, he engages himself to do a thing that cannot be done with respect to himself.

Thus convinced, as you must be, of this barbarous inequality, do not proceed to worsen your injustice by punishing the man who has nothing for having dared to filch something from the man who has everything: your inequitable pledge gives him a greater right to it than ever. In driving him to perjury by forcing him to make a promise which, for him, is absurd, you justify all the crimes to which this perjury will impel him; it is not for you to punish something for which you have been the cause. I have no need to say more to make you sense the terrible cruelty of chastising thieves. Imitate the wise law of the people I spoke of just a moment ago; punish the man neglectful enough to let himself be robbed; but proclaim no kind of penalty against robbery. Consider whether your pledge does not authorize the act, and whether he who commits it does any more than put

himself in harmony with the most sacred of Nature's movements, that of preserving one's own existence at no matter whose expense.

The transgressions we are considering in this second class of man's duties toward his fellows include actions for whose undertaking libertinage may be the cause; among those which are pointed to as particularly incompatible with approved behaviour are prostitution, incest, rape, and sodomy. We surely must not for one moment doubt that all those known as moral crimes, that is to say, all acts of the sort to which those we have just cited belong, are of total inconsequence under a government whose sole duty consists in preserving, by whatever may be the means, the form essential to its continuance: there you have a republican government's unique morality. Well, the republic being permanently menaced from the outside by the despots surrounding it, the means to its preservation cannot be imagined as moral means, for the republic will preserve itself only by war, and nothing is less moral than war. I ask how one will be able to demonstrate that in a state rendered immoral by its obligations, it is essential that the individual be moral? (5) I will go further: it is a very good thing he is not. The Greek lawgivers perfectly appreciated the capital necessity of corrupting the member-citizens in order that, their moral dissolution coming into conflict with the establishment and its values, there would result the insurrection that is always indispensable to a political system of perfect happiness which, like republican government, must necessarily excite the hatred and envy of all its foreign neighbours. Insurrection, thought these sage legislators, is not at all a moral condition; however, it has got to be a republic's permanent condition. Hence it would be no less absurd than dangerous to require that those who are to insure the perpetual immoral subversion of the established order themselves be moral beings: for the state of amoral man is one of tranquillity and peace,

the state of an immoral man is one of perpetual unrest that pushes him to, and identifies him with, the necessary insurrection in which the republican must always keep the government of which he is a member.

We may now enter into detail and begin by analysing modesty, that faint-hearted negative impulse of contradiction to impure affections. Were it among Nature's intentions that man be modest, assuredly she would not have caused him to be born naked; unnumbered peoples, less degraded by civilization than we, go about naked and feel no shame on that account; there can be no doubt that the custom of dressing has had its single origin in harshness of climate and the coquetry of women who would rather provoke desire and secure to themselves its effects than have it caused and satisfied independently of themselves. They further reckoned that Nature having created them not without blemishes, they would be far better assured of all the means needed to please by concealing these flaws behind adornments; thus modesty, far from being a virtue, was merely one of corruption's earliest consequences, one of the first devices of female guile.

Lycurgus and Solon, fully convinced that immodesty's results are to keep the citizen in the immoral state indispensable to the mechanics of republican government, obliged girls to exhibit themselves naked at the theatre. (It has been said the intention of these legislators was, by dulling the passion men experienced for a naked girl, to render more active the one men sometimes experience for their own sex. These sages caused to be shown that for which they wanted there to be disgust, and to be hidden what they thought inclined to inspire sweeter desires; in either case, did they not strive after the objective we have just mentioned? One sees that they sensed the need of immorality in

republican manners.) Rome imitated the example: at the games of Flora they danced naked; the greater part of pagan mysteries were celebrated thus; among some peoples, nudity even passed for a virtue. In any event, immodesty is born of lewd inclinations; what comes of these inclinations comprises the alleged criminality we are discussing, of which prostitution is the foremost effect.

Now that we have got back upon our feet and broken with the host of prejudices that held us captive; now that, brought closer to Nature by the quantity of prejudices we have recently obliterated, we listen only to Nature's voice, we are fully convinced that if anything were criminal, it would be to resist the penchants she inspires in us, rather than to come to grips with them. We are persuaded that lust, being a product of those penchants, is not to be stifled or legislated against, but that it is, rather, a matter of arranging for the means whereby passion may be satisfied in peace. We must hence undertake to introduce order into this sphere of affairs, and to establish all the security necessary so that, when need sends the citizen near the objects of lust, he can give himself over to doing with them all that his passions demand, without ever being hampered by anything, for there is no moment in the life of man when liberty in its whole amplitude is so important to him. Various stations, cheerful, sanitary, spacious, properly furnished and in every respect safe, will be erected in divers points in each city; in them, all sexes, all ages, all creatures possible will be offered to the caprices of the libertines who shall come to divert themselves, and the most absolute subordination will be the rule of the individuals participating; the slightest refusal or recalcitrance will be instantly and arbitrarily punished by the injured party. I must explain this last more fully, and weigh it against republican manners; I promised I would employ the same logic from beginning to end, and I shall keep my word.

Although, as I told you just a moment ago, no passion has a greater need of the widest horizon of liberty than has this, none, doubtless, is as despotic; here it is that man likes to command, to be obeyed, to surround himself with slaves compelled to satisfy him; well, whenever you withhold from man the secret means whereby he exhales the dose of despotism Nature instilled in the depths of his heart, he will seek other outlets for it, it will be vented upon nearby objects; it will trouble the government. (6) If you would avoid that danger, permit a free flight and rein to those tyrannical desires which, despite himself, torment man ceaselessly: content with having been able to exercise his small dominion in the middle of the harem of sultanas and youths whose submission your good offices and his money procure for him, he will go away appeased and with nothing but fond feelings for a government which so obligingly affords him every means of satisfying his concupiscence; proceed, on the other hand, after a different fashion, between the citizen and those objects of public lust raise the ridiculous obstacles in olden times invented by ministerial tyranny and by the lubricity of our Sardanapaluses (It is well known that the infamous and criminal Sartine devised, in the interests of the king's lewdness, the plan of having Dubarry read to Louis XV, thrice each week, the private details, enriched by Sartine, of all that transpired in the evil corners of Paris. This department of the French Nero's libertinage cost the State three millions.) —, do that, and the citizen, soon embittered against your regime, soon jealous of the despotism he sees you exercise all by yourself, will shake off the yoke you lay upon him, and, weary of your manner of ruling, will, as he has just done, substitute another for it.

But observe how the Greek legislators, thoroughly imbued with these ideas, treated debauchery at Lacedaemon, at Athens: rather than prohibiting, they sotted the citizen on it; no species of lechery was forbidden him; and Socrates, whom the oracle described

as the wisest philosopher of the land, passing indifferently from Aspasia's arms into those of Alcibiades, was not on that account less the glory of Greece. I am going to advance somewhat further, and however contrary are my ideas to our present customs, as my object is to prove that we must make all haste to alter those customs if we wish to preserve the government we have adopted, I am going to try to convince you that the prostitution of women who bear the name of honest is no more dangerous than the prostitution of men, and that not only must we associate women with the lecheries practiced in the houses I have set up, but we must even build some for them, where their whims and the requirements of their temper, ardent like ours but in a quite different way, may too find satisfaction with every sex.

First of all, what right have you to assert that women ought to be exempted from the blind submission to men's caprices Nature dictates? And, secondly, by what other right do you defend their subjugation to a continence impossible to their physical structure and of perfect uselessness to their honour?

I will treat each of these questions separately.

It is certain, in a state of Nature, that women are born vulgivagous, that is to say, are born enjoying the advantages of other female animals and belonging, like them and without exception, to all males; such were, without any doubt, both the primary laws of Nature and the only institutions of those earliest societies into which men gathered. (7) Self-interest, egoism, and love degraded these primitive attitudes, at once so simple and so natural; one thought oneself enriched by taking a woman to wife, and with her the goods of her family: there we find satisfied the first two feelings I have just indicated;

still more often, this woman was taken by force, and thereby one became attached to her—there we find the other of the motives in action, and in every case, injustice.

Never may an act of possession be exercised upon a free being; the exclusive possession of a woman is no less unjust than the possession of slaves; all men are born free, all have equal rights: never should we lose sight of those principles; according to which never may there be granted to one sex the legitimate right to lay monopolizing hands upon the other, and never may one of these sexes, or classes, arbitrarily possess the other. (7)

Similarly, a woman existing in the purity of Nature's laws cannot allege, as justification for refusing herself to someone who desires her, the love she bears another, because such a response is based upon exclusion, and no man may be excluded from the having of a woman as of the moment it is clear she definitely belongs to all men. The act of possession can only be exercised upon a chattel or an animal, never upon an individual who resembles us, and all the ties which can bind a woman to a man are quite as unjust as illusory. (7)

If then it becomes incontestable that we have received from Nature the right indiscriminately to express our wishes to all women, it likewise becomes incontestable that we have the right to compel their submission, not exclusively, for I should then be contradicting myself, but temporarily. (Let it not be said that I contradict myself here, and that after having established, at some point further above, that we have no right to bind a woman to ourselves, I destroy those principles when I declare now we have the right to constrain her; I repeat, it is a question of enjoyment only, not of property: I have no right of possession upon that fountain I find by the road, but I have certain rights to its use; I have the right to avail myself of the limpid water it offers my thirst; similarly, I

have no real right of possession over such-and-such a woman, but I have incontestable rights to the enjoyment of her; I have the right to force from her this enjoyment, if she refuses me it for whatever the cause may be.) It cannot be denied that we have the right to decree laws that compel woman to yield to the flames of him who would have her; violence itself being one of that right's effects, we can employ it lawfully. Indeed! - has Nature not proven that we have that right, by bestowing upon us the strength needed to bend women to our will? It is in vain women seek to bring to their defence either modesty or their attachment to other men; these illusory grounds are worthless; earlier, we saw how contemptible and facetious is the sentiment of modesty. Love, which may be termed the soul's madness, is no more a title by which their constancy may be justified: love, satisfying two persons only, the beloved and the loving, cannot serve the happiness of others, and **it is for the sake of the happiness of everyone, and not for an egotistical and privileged happiness, that women have been given to us.** All men therefore have an equal right of enjoyment of all women; therefore, there is no man who, in keeping with natural law, may lay claim to a unique and personal right over a woman. (7) The law which will oblige them to prostitute themselves, as often and in any manner we wish, in the houses of debauchery we referred to a moment ago, and which will coerce them if they balk, punish them if they shirk or dawdle, is thus one of the most equitable of laws, against which there can be no sane or rightful complaint.

A man who would like to enjoy whatever woman or girl will henceforth be able, if the laws you promulgate are just, to have her summoned at once to duty at one of the houses; and there, under the supervision of the matrons of that temple of Venus, she will be surrendered to him, to satisfy, humbly and with submission, all the fancies in which he will be pleased to indulge with her, however strange or irregular they may be,

since there is no extravagance which is not in Nature, none which she does not acknowledge as her own. (8) There remains but to fix the woman's age; now, I maintain it cannot be fixed without restricting the freedom of a man who desires a girl of any given age.

He who has the right to eat the fruit of a tree may assuredly pluck it ripe or green, according to the inspiration of his taste. But, it will be objected, there is an age when the man's proceedings would be decidedly harmful to the girl's well-being. This consideration is utterly without value; once you concede me the proprietary right of enjoyment, that right is independent of the effects enjoyment produces; from this moment on, it becomes one, whether this enjoyment be beneficial or damaging to the object which must submit itself to me. Have I not already proven that it is legitimate to force the woman's will in this connection and that, immediately she excites the desire to enjoy, she has got to expose herself to this enjoyment, putting all egotistical sentiments quite aside? The issue of her well-being, I repeat, is irrelevant. As soon as concern for this consideration threatens to detract from or enfeeble the enjoyment of him who desires her, and who has the right to appropriate her, this consideration for age ceases to exist; for what the object may experience, condemned by Nature and by the law to slake momentarily the other's thirst, is nothing to the point; in this study, we are only interested in what agrees with him who desires. But we will redress the balance.

Yes, we will redress it; doubtless we ought to. These women we have just so cruelly enslaved—there is no denying we must recompense them, and I come now to the second question I proposed to answer. If we admit, as we have just done, that all women ought to be subjugated to our desires, we may certainly allow then ample satisfaction of theirs.

Our laws must be favourable to their fiery temperament. It is absurd to locate both their honour and their virtue in the anti-natural strength they employ to resist the penchants with which they have been far more profusely endowed than we; this injustice of manners is rendered more flagrant still since we contrive at once to weaken them by seduction, and then to punish them for yielding to all the efforts we have made to provoke their fall. All the absurdity of our manners, it seems to me, is graven in this shocking paradox, and this brief outline alone ought to awaken us to the urgency of exchanging them for manners more pure. I say then that women, having been endowed with considerably more violent penchants for carnal pleasure than we, will be able to give themselves over to it wholeheartedly, absolutely free of all encumbering hymeneal ties, of all false notions of modesty, absolutely restored to a state of Nature; I want laws permitting them to give themselves to as many men as they see fit; I would have them accorded the enjoyment of all sexes and, as in the case of men, the enjoyment of all parts of the body; and under the special clause prescribing their surrender to all who desire them, there must be subjoined another guaranteeing them a similar freedom to enjoy all they deem worthy to satisfy them. (9)

What, I demand to know, what dangers are there in this license? Children who will lack fathers? Ha! what can that matter in a republic where every individual must have no other dam than the nation, where everyone born is the motherland's child. And how much more they will cherish her, they who, never having known any but her, will comprehend from birth that it is from her alone all must be expected. Do not suppose you are fashioning good republicans so long as children, who ought to belong solely to the republic, remain immured in their families. (10) By extending to the family, to a restricted number of persons, the portion of affection they ought to distribute amongst

their brothers, they inevitably adopt those persons' sometimes very harmful prejudices; such children's opinions, their thoughts are particularized, malformed, and the virtues of a Man of the State become completely inaccessible to them. Finally abandoning their heart altogether to those by whom they have been given breath, they have no devotion left for what will cause them to mature, to understand, and to shine, as if these latter blessings were not more important than the former! If there is the greatest disadvantage in thus letting children imbibe interests from their family often in sharp disagreement with those of their country, there is then the most excellent argument for separating them from their family; and are they not naturally weaned away by the means I suggest, since in absolutely destroying all marital bonds, there are no longer born, as fruits of the woman's pleasure, anything but children to whom knowledge of their father is absolutely forbidden, and with that the possibility of belonging to only one family, instead of being, as they must be, purely *les enfants de la patrie*.

There will then be houses intended for women's libertinage and, like the men's, under the government's protection; in these establishments there will be furnished all the individuals of either sex women could desire, and the more constantly they frequent these places the higher they will be esteemed. There is nothing so barbarous or so ludicrous as to have identified their honour and their virtue with the resistance women show the desires Nature implants in them, and which continually inflame those who are hypocrite enough to pass censure on them. From the most tender age (The Babylonians scarcely awaited their seventh year to carry their first fruits to the temple of Venus. The first impulse to concupiscence a young girl feels is the moment when Nature bids her prostitute herself, and without any other kind of consideration she must yield instantly Nature speaks; if she resists, she outrages Nature's law), a girl released from her

paternal fetters, no longer having anything to preserve for marriage (completely abolished by the wise laws I advocate), (11) and superior to the prejudices which in former times imprisoned her sex, will therefore, in the houses created for the purpose, be able to indulge in everything to which her constitution prompts her; she will be received respectfully, copiously satisfied, and, returned once again into society, she will be able to tell of the pleasures she tasted quite as publicly as today she speaks of a ball or promenade. O charming sex, you will be free: (11) as do men, you will enjoy all the pleasures of which Nature makes a duty, from not one will you be withheld. Must the diviner half of humankind be laden with irons by the other? Ah, break those irons; Nature wills it. For a bridle have nothing but your inclinations, for laws only your desires, for morality Nature's alone; languish no longer under brutal prejudices which wither your charms and hold captive the divine impulses of your hearts; (11) (Women are unaware to what point their lasciviousness embellishes them. Let one compare two women of roughly comparable age and beauty, one of whom lives in celibacy, and the other in libertinage: it will be seen by how much the latter exceeds in éclat and freshness; all violence done Nature is far more wearing than the abuse of pleasures; everyone knows beds improve a woman's looks) like us, you are free, the field of action whereon one contends for Venus' favours is as open to you as it is to us; have no fear of absurd reproaches; pedantry and superstition are things of the past; no longer will you be seen to blush at your charming delinquencies; crowned with myrtle and roses, the esteem we conceive for you will be henceforth in direct proportion to the scale you give your extravagances.

What has just been said ought doubtless to dispense us from examining adultery; nevertheless, let's cast a glance upon it, however non-existent it be in the eyes of the

laws I am establishing. To what point was it not ridiculous in our former institutions to consider adultery criminal! Were there anything absurd in the world, very surely it is the timelessness ascribed to conjugal relations; it appears to me it is but necessary to scrutinize, or sense the weight of, those bonds in order to cease to view as wicked the act which lightens them; Nature, as we remarked recently, having supplied women with a temper more ardent, with a sensibility more profound, than she awarded persons of the other sex, it is unquestionably for women that the marital contract proves more onerous.

Tender women, you ablaze with love's fire, compensate yourselves now, and do so boldly and unafraid; persuade yourselves that there can exist no evil in obedience to Nature's promptings, that it is not for one man she created you, but to please them all, without discrimination. Let no anxiety inhibit you. Imitate the Greek republicans; never did the philosophers whence they had their laws contrive to make adultery a crime for them, and nearly all authorized disorderliness among women. Thomas More proves in his Utopia that it becomes women to surrender themselves to debauchery, and that great man's ideas were not always pure dreams. (The same thinker wished affianced couples to see each other naked before marriage. How many alliances would fail, were this law enforced! It might be declared that the contrary is indeed what is termed purchase of merchandise sight unseen.)

Amongst the Tartars, the more profligate a woman, the more she was honoured; about her neck she publicly wore a certain jewellery attesting to her impudicity, and those who were not at all decorated were not at all admired. In Peru, families cede their wives and daughters to the visiting traveller; they are rented at so much the day, like horses, or

carriages! Volumes, finally, would not suffice to demonstrate that lewd behaviour has never been held criminal amongst the illuminated peoples of the earth. Every philosopher knows full well it is solely to the Christian impostors we are indebted for having puffed it up into crime. The priests had excellent cause to forbid us lechery: this injunction, by reserving to them acquaintance with and absolution for these private sins, gave them an incredible ascendancy over women, and opened up to them a career of lubricity whose scope knew no limits. We know only too well how they took advantage of it and how they would again abuse their powers, were they not hopelessly discredited.

Is incest more dangerous? Hardly. It loosens family ties and the citizen has that much more love to lavish on his country; the primary laws of Nature dictate it to us, our feelings vouch for the fact; and nothing is so enjoyable as an object we have coveted over the years. The most primitive institutions smiled upon incest; it is found in society's origins: it was consecrated in every religion, every law encouraged it. If we traverse the world we will find incest everywhere established. The blacks of the Ivory Coast and Gabon prostitute their wives to their own children; in Judah, the eldest son must marry his father's wife; the people of Chile lie indifferently with their sisters, their daughters, and marry mother and daughter at the same time. I would venture, in a word, that incest ought to be every government's law—every government whose basis is fraternity. How is it that reasonable men were able to carry absurdity to the point of believing that the enjoyment of one's mother, sister, or daughter could ever be criminal? Is it not, I ask, an abominable view wherein it is made to appear a crime for a man to place higher value upon the enjoyment of an object to which natural feeling draws him close? (12) One might just as well say that we are forbidden to love too much the individuals Nature

enjoins us to love best, and that the more she gives us a hunger for some object, the more she orders us away from it. These are absurd paradoxes; only people bestialized by superstition can believe or uphold them. The community of women I am establishing necessarily leading to incest, there remains little more to say about a supposed misdemeanour whose inexistence is too plainly evident to warrant further pursuit of the matter, and we shall turn our attention to rape, which at first glance seems to be, of all libertinage's excesses, the one which is most dearly established as being wrong, by reason of the outrage it appears to cause. It is certain, however, that rape, an act so very rare and so very difficult to prove, wrongs one's neighbour less than theft, since the latter is destructive to property, the former merely damaging to it. (13) Beyond that, what objections have you to the ravisher? What will you say, when he replies to you that, as a matter of fact, the injury he has committed is trifling indeed, since he has done no more than place a little sooner the object he has abused in the very state in which she would soon have been put by marriage and love.

But sodomy, that alleged crime which will draw the fire of heaven upon cities addicted to it, is sodomy not a monstrous deviation whose punishment could not be severe enough? Ah, sorrowful it is to have to reproach our ancestors for the judiciary murders in which, upon this head, they dared indulge themselves. We wonder that savagery could ever reach the point where you condemn to death an unhappy person all of whose crime amounts to not sharing your tastes. (14) One shudders to think that scarce forty years ago the legislators' absurd thinking had not evolved beyond this point. Console yourselves, citizens; such absurdities are to cease: the intelligence of your lawmakers will answer for it. Thoroughly enlightened upon this weakness occurring in a few men, people deeply sense today that such error cannot be criminal, and that Nature, who

places such slight importance upon the essence that flows in our loins, can scarcely be vexed by our choice when we are pleased to vent it into this or that avenue.

What single crime can exist here? For no one will wish to maintain that all the parts of the body do not resemble each other, that there are some which are pure, and others defiled; (14) but, as it is unthinkable such nonsense be advanced seriously, the only possible crime would consist in the waste of semen. Well, is it likely that this semen is so precious to Nature that its loss is necessarily criminal? Were that so, would she every day institute those losses? And is it not to authorize them to permit them in dreams, to permit them in the act of taking one's pleasure with a pregnant woman? Is it possible to imagine Nature having allowed us the possibility of committing a crime that would outrage her? (14) Is it possible that she consent to the destruction by man of her own pleasures, and to his thereby becoming stronger than she? It is unheard of—into what an abyss of folly one is hurled when, in reasoning, one abandons the aid of reason's torch! Let us abide in our unshakable assurance that it is as easy to enjoy a woman in one manner as in another, that it makes absolutely no difference whether one enjoys a girl or a boy, and as soon as it is clearly understood that no inclinations or tastes can exist in us save the ones we have from Nature, that she is too wise and too consistent to have given us any which could ever offend her. (14)

The penchant for sodomy is the result of physical formation, to which we contribute nothing and which we cannot alter. At the most tender age, some children reveal that penchant, and it is never corrected in them. Sometimes it is the fruit of satiety; but even in this case, is it less Nature's doing? Regardless of how it is viewed, it is her work, and, in every instance, what she inspires must be respected by men. (14) If, were one to take an

exact inventory, it should come out that this taste is infinitely more affecting than the other, that the pleasures resulting from it are far more lively, and that for this reason its exponents are a thousand times more numerous than its enemies, would it not then be possible to conclude that, far from affronting Nature, this vice serves her intentions, and that she is less delighted by our procreation than we so foolishly believe? Why, as we travel about the world, how many peoples do we not see holding women in contempt! Many are the men who strictly avoid employing them for anything but the having of the child necessary to replace them. The communal aspect of life in republics always renders this vice more frequent in that form of society; but it is not dangerous. Would the Greek legislators have introduced it into their republics had they thought it so? Quite the contrary; they deemed it necessary to a warlike race. Plutarch speaks with enthusiasm of the battalion of lovers: for many a year they alone defended Greece's freedom. The vice reigned amongst comrades-in-arms, and cemented their unity. The greatest of men lean toward sodomy. At the time it was discovered, the whole of America was found inhabited by people of this taste. In Louisiana, amongst the Illinois, Indians in feminine garb prostituted themselves as courtesans. The blacks of Benguélá publicly keep men; nearly all the seraglios of Algiers are today exclusively filled with young boys. Not content to tolerate love for young boys, the Thebans made it mandatory; the philosopher of Chaeronea prescribed sodomy as the surest way to a youth's affection.

We know to what extent it prevailed in Rome, where they had public places in which young boys, costumed as girls, and girls as boys, prostituted themselves. In their letters, Martial, Catullus, Tibullus, Horace, and Virgil wrote to men as though to their mistresses; and we read in Plutarch (*The Moralities*, "On Love") that women must in no way figure in men's love. The Amasians of Crete used to abduct boys, and their initiation was

distinguished by the most singular ceremonies. When they were taken with love for one, they notified the parents upon what day the ravisher wished to carry him off; the youth put up some resistance if his lover failed to please him; in the contrary case, they went off together, and the seducer restored him to his family as soon as he had made use of him; for in this passion as in that for women, one always has too much when one has had enough. Strabo informs us that on this very island, seraglios were peopled with boys only; they were prostituted openly.

Is one more authority required to prove how useful this vice is in a republic? Let us lend an ear to Jerome the Peripatetic: "The love of youths," says he, "spread throughout all of Greece, for it instilled in us strength and courage, and thus stood us in good stead when we drove the tyrants out; conspiracies were formed amongst lovers, and they were readier to endure torture than denounce their accomplices; such patriots sacrificed everything to the State's prosperity; it was beheld as a certain thing, that these attachments steadied the republic, (15) women were declaimed against, and to entertain connections with such creatures was a frailty reserved to despots." Pederasty has always been the vice of warrior races. From Caesar we learn that the Gauls were to an extraordinary degree given to it. The wars fought to sustain the republic brought about the separation of the two sexes, and hence the propagation of the vice, and when its consequences, so useful to the State, were recognized, religion speedily blessed it. That the Romans sanctified the amours of Jupiter and Ganymede is well known. Sextus Empiricus assures us that this caprice was compulsory amongst the Persians. At last, the women, jealous and contemned, offered to render their husbands the same service they received from young boys; some few men made the experiment, and returned to their former habits, finding the illusion impossible. The Turks, greatly inclined toward this

depravity Mohammed consecrated in the Koran, were nevertheless convinced that a very young virgin could well enough be substituted for a youth, and rarely did they grow to womanhood without having passed through the experience. Sextus Quintus and Sanchez allowed this debauch; the latter even undertook to show it was of use to procreation, and that a child created after this preliminary exercise was infinitely better constituted thanks to it. Finally, women found restitution by turning to each other. This latter fantasy doubtless has no more disadvantages than the other, since nothing comes of the refusal to reproduce, and since the means of those who have a bent for reproduction are powerful enough for reproduction's adversaries never to be able to harm population. Amongst the Greeks, this female perversion was also supported by policy: the result of it was that, finding each other sufficient, women sought less communication with men and their detrimental influence in the republic's affairs was thus held to a minimum. Lucian informs us of what progress this license promoted, and it is not without interest we see it exemplified in Sappho.

In fine, these are perfectly inoffensive manias; were women to carry them even further, were they to go to the point of caressing monsters and animals, as the example of every race teaches us, no ill could possibly result therefrom, because corruption of manners, often of prime utility to a government, cannot in any sense harm it, and we must demand enough wisdom and enough prudence of our legislators to be entirely sure that no law will emanate from them that would repress **perversions** which, **being determined by constitution and being inseparable from physical structure, cannot render the person in whom they are present any more guilty than the person Nature created deformed.**

(16)

In the second category of man's crimes against his brethren, there is left to us only murder to examine, and then we will move on to man's duties toward himself. Of all the offences man may commit against his fellows, murder is without question the cruellest, since it deprives man of the single asset he has received from Nature, and its loss is irreparable. Nevertheless, at this stage several questions arise, leaving aside the wrong murder does him who becomes its victim.

1. As regards the laws of Nature only, is this act really criminal?

2. Is it criminal with what regards the laws of politics?

3. Is it harmful to society?

4. What must be a republican government's attitude toward it?

5. Finally, must murder be repressed by murder?

Each of these questions will be treated separately; the subject is important enough to warrant thorough consideration; our ideas touching murder may surprise for their boldness. But what does that matter? Have we not acquired the right to say anything? The time has come for the ventilation of great verities; men today will not be content with less. The time has come for error to disappear; that blindfold must fall beside the heads of kings. From Nature's point of view, is murder a crime? That is the first question posed.

It is probable that we are going to humiliate man's pride by lowering him again to the rank of all of Nature's other creatures, but the philosopher does not flatter small human vanities; ever in burning pursuit of truth, he discerns it behind stupid notions of pride, lays it bare, elaborates upon it, and intrepidly shows it to the astonished world.

What is man? And what difference is there between him and other plants, between him and all the other animals of the world? None, obviously. Fortunately placed, like them, upon this globe, he is born like them; like them, he reproduces, rises, and falls; like them he arrives at old age and sinks like them into nothingness at the close of the life span. Nature assigns each species of animal, in accordance with its organic construction. Since the parallels are so exact that the inquiring eye of philosophy is absolutely unable to perceive any grounds for discrimination, there is then just as much evil in killing animals as men, or just as little, and whatever be the distinctions we make, they will be found to stem from our pride's prejudices, than which, unhappily, nothing is more absurd. Let us all the same press on to the question. You cannot deny it is one and the same, to destroy a man or a beast; (17) but is not the destruction of all living animals decidedly an evil, as the Pythagoreans believed, and as they who dwell on the banks of Ganges yet believe? Before answering that, we remind the reader that we are examining the question only in terms of Nature and in relation to her; later on, we will envisage it with reference to men.

Now then, what value can Nature set upon individuals whose making costs her neither the least trouble nor the slightest concern? The worker values his work according to the labour it entails and the time spent creating it. Does man cost Nature anything? And, under the supposition that he does, does he cost her more than an ape or an elephant? I

go further: what are the regenerative materials used by Nature? Of what are composed the beings which come into life? Do not the three elements of which they are formed result from the prior destruction of other bodies? If all individuals were possessed of eternal life, would it not become impossible for Nature to create any new ones? If

Nature denies eternity to beings, it follows that their destruction is one of her laws. (18)

Now, once we observe that destruction is so useful to her that she absolutely cannot dispense with it, and that she cannot achieve her creations without drawing from the store of destruction which death prepares for her, from this moment onward the idea of annihilation which we attach to death ceases to be real; there is no more veritable annihilation; what we call the end of the living animal is no longer a true *finis*, but a simple transformation, a transmutation of matter, (18) what every modern philosopher acknowledges as one of Nature's fundamental laws. According to these irrefutable principles, death is hence no more than a change of form, an imperceptible passage from one existence into another, and that is what Pythagoras called metempsychosis.

These truths once admitted, I ask whether it can ever be proposed that destruction is a crime? Will you dare tell me, with the design of preserving your absurd illusions, that transmutation is destruction? No, surely not; for, to prove that, it would be necessary to demonstrate matter inert for an instant, for a moment in repose. Well, you will never detect any such moment. Little animals are formed immediately a large animal expires, and these little animals' lives are simply one of the necessary effects determined by the large animal's temporary sleep. Given this, will you dare suggest that one pleases Nature more than another? To support that contention, you would have to prove what cannot be proven: that elongated or square are more useful, more agreeable to Nature than oval or triangular shapes; you would have to prove that, with what regards Nature's sublime

scheme, a sluggard who fattens in idleness is more useful than the horse, whose service is of such importance, or than a steer, whose body is so precious that there is no part of it which is not useful; you would have to say that the venomous serpent is more necessary than the faithful dog.

Now, as not one of these systems can be upheld, one must hence consent unreservedly to acknowledge our inability to annihilate Nature's works; in light of the certainty that the only thing we do when we give ourselves over to destroying is merely to effect an alteration in forms which does not extinguish life, it becomes beyond human powers to prove that there may exist anything criminal in the alleged destruction of a creature, of whatever age, sex, or species you may suppose it. Led still further in our series of inferences proceeding one from the other, we affirm that the act you commit in juggling the forms of Nature's different productions is of advantage to her, since thereby you supply her the primary material for her reconstructions, tasks which would be compromised were you to desist from destroying.

Well, let her do the destroying, they tell you; one ought to let her do it, of course, but they are Nature's impulses man follows when he indulges in homicide; (19) it is Nature who advises him, and the man who destroys his fellow is to Nature what are the plague and famine, like them sent by her hand which employs every possible means more speedily to obtain of destruction this primary matter, itself absolutely essential to her works.

Let us deign for a moment to illumine our spirit by philosophy's sacred flame; what other than Nature's voice suggests to us personal hatreds, revenges, wars, in a word, all those

causes of perpetual murder? Now, if she incites us to murderous acts, she has need of them; that once grasped, how may we suppose ourselves guilty in her regard when we do nothing more than obey her intentions?

But that is more than what is needed to convince any enlightened reader, that for murder ever to be an outrage to Nature is impossible.

Is it a political crime? We must avow, on the contrary, that it is, unhappily, merely one of policy's and politics' greatest instruments. Is it not by dint of murders that France is free today? Needless to say, here we are referring to the murders occasioned by war, not to the atrocities committed by plotters and rebels; the latter, destined to the public's execration, have only to be recollected to arouse forever general horror and indignation. What study, what science, has greater need of murder's support than that which tends only to deceive, whose sole end is the expansion of one nation at another's expense? Are wars, the unique fruit of this political barbarism, anything but the means whereby a nation is nourished, whereby it is strengthened, whereby it is buttressed? And what is war if not the science of destruction? A strange blindness in man, who publicly teaches the art of killing, who rewards the most accomplished killer, and who punishes him who for some particular reason does away with his enemy! Is it not high time errors so savage be repaired? (19)

Is murder then a crime against society? But how could that reasonably be imagined? What difference does it make to this murderous society, whether it have one member more, or less? Will its laws, its manners, its customs be vitiated? Has an individual's death ever had any influence upon the general mass? And after the loss of the greatest battle,

what am I saying? After the obliteration of half the world—or, if one wishes, of the entire world—would the little number of survivors, should there be any, notice even the faintest difference in things? No, alas. Nor would Nature notice any either, and the stupid pride of man, who believes everything created for him, would be dashed indeed, after the total extinction of the human species, were it to be seen that nothing in Nature had changed, and that the stars' flight had not for that been retarded. Let us continue.

What must the attitude of a warlike and republican state be toward murder?

Dangerous it should certainly be, either to cast discredit upon the act, or to punish it. Republican mettle calls for a touch of ferocity: if he grows soft, if his energy slackens in him, the republican will be subjugated in a trice. A most unusual thought comes to mind at this point, but if it is audacious it is also true, and I will mention it. A nation that begins by governing itself as a republic will only be sustained by virtues because, in order to attain the most, one must always start with the least. But an already old and decayed nation which courageously casts off the yoke of its monarchical government in order to adopt a republican one, will only be maintained by many crimes; for it is criminal already, and if it were to wish to pass from crime to virtue, that is to say, from a violent to a pacific, benign condition, it should fall into an inertia whose result would soon be its certain ruin. What happens to the tree you would transplant from a soil full of vigour to a dry and sandy plain? All intellectual ideas are so greatly subordinate to Nature's physical aspect that the comparisons supplied us by agriculture will never deceive us in morals.

(20)

Savages, the most independent of men, the nearest to Nature, daily indulge in murder which amongst them goes unpunished. In Sparta, in Lacedaemon, they hunted Helots, just as we in France go on partridge shoots. The freest of people are they who are most friendly to murder: in Mindanao, a man who wishes to commit a murder is raised to the rank of warrior brave, he is straightaway decorated with a turban; amongst the Caraguos, one must have killed seven men to obtain the honours of this headdress: the inhabitants of Borneo believe all those they put to death will serve them when they themselves depart life; devout Spaniards made a vow to St. James of Galicia to kill a dozen Americans every day; in the kingdom of Tangut, there is selected a strong and vigorous young man: on certain days of the year he is allowed to kill whomever he encounters! Was there ever a people better disposed to murder than the Jews? One sees it in every guise, upon every page of their history.

Now and again, China's emperor and mandarins take measures to stir up a revolt amongst the people, in order to derive, from these manoeuvres, the right to transform them into horrible slaughters. May that soft and effeminate people rise against their tyrants; the latter will be massacred in their turn, and with much greater justice; murder, adopted always, always necessary, will have but changed its victims; it has been the delight of some, and will become the felicity of others.

An infinite number of nations tolerates public assassinations; they are freely permitted in Genoa, Venice, Naples, and throughout Albania; at Kachoa on the San Domingo River, murderers, undisguised and unashamedly, upon your orders and before your very eyes cut the throat of the person you have pointed out to them; Hindus take opium to

encourage themselves to murder; and then, rushing out into the street, they butcher everyone they meet; English travellers have found this idiosyncrasy in Batavia, too.

What people were at once greater and more bloodthirsty than the Romans, and what nation longer preserved its splendour and freedom? The gladiatorial spectacles fed its bravery, it became warlike through the habit of making a game of murder. Twelve or fifteen hundred victims filled the circus' arena every day, and there the women, crueler than the men, dared demand that the dying fall gracefully and be skinned while still in death's throes. The Romans moved from that to the pleasures of seeing dwarfs cut each other to pieces; and when the Christian cult, then infecting the world, came to persuade men there was evil in killing one another, the tyrants immediately enchain'd that people, and everyone's heroes became their toys.

Everywhere, in short, it was rightly believed that the murderer—that is to say, the man who stifled his sensibilities to the point of killing his fellow man, and of defying public or private vengeance—everywhere, I say, it was thought such a man could only be very courageous, and consequently very precious to a warlike or republican community. We may discover certain nations which, yet more ferocious, could only satisfy themselves by immolating children, and very often their own, and we will see these actions universally adopted, and upon occasion even made part of the law. Several savage tribes kill their children immediately they are born. Mothers, on the banks of the Orinoco, firm in the belief their daughters were born only to be miserable, since their fate was to become wives in this country where women were found insufferable, immolated them as soon as they were brought into the light. In Taprobane and in the kingdom of Sopit, all deformed children were immolated by their own parents. If their children are born on certain days

of the week, the women of Madagascar expose them to wild beasts. In the republics of Greece, all the children who came into the world were carefully examined, and if they were found not to conform to the requirements determined by the republic's defence, they were sacrificed on the spot: in those days, it was not deemed essential to build richly furnished and endowed houses for the preservation of mankind's scum. (It must be hoped the nation will eliminate this expense, the most useless of all; every individual born lacking the qualities to become useful someday to the republic, has no right to live, and the best thing for all concerned is to deprive him of life the moment he receives it.)

(21) Up until the transferral of the seat of the Empire, all the Romans who were not disposed to feed their offspring flung them upon the dung heaps. The ancient legislators had no scruple about condemning children to death, and never did one of their codes repress the rights of a father over his family. Aristotle urged abortion; and those ancient republicans, filled with enthusiasm, with patriotic fervour, failed to appreciate this commiseration for the individual person that one finds in modern nations: they loved their children less, but their country more. In all the cities of China, one finds every morning an incredible number of children abandoned in the streets; a dung cart picks them up at dawn, and they are tossed into a moat; often, midwives themselves disencumbered mothers by instantly plunging their issue into vats of boiling water, or by throwing it into the river. In Peking, infants were put into little reed baskets that were left on the canals; every day, these canals were skimmed clean, and the famous traveller Duhalde calculates as above thirty thousand the number of infants collected in the course of each search.

It cannot be denied that it is extraordinarily necessary, extremely politic to erect a dike against overpopulation in a republican system; for entirely contrary reasons, the birth

rate must be encouraged in a monarchy; there, the tyrants being rich only through the number of their slaves, they assuredly have to have men; but do not doubt for a minute that populousness is a genuine vice in a republican government.

However, it is not necessary to butcher people to restrain it, as our modern decemvirs (a Roman term for a ten man commission) used to say; it is but a question of not leaving it the means of extending beyond the limits its happiness prescribes. **Beware of too great a multiplication in a race whose every member is sovereign, and be certain that revolutions are never but the effect of a too numerous population.** (22) If, for the State's splendour, you accord your warriors the right to destroy men, for the preservation of that same State grant also unto each individual the right to give himself over as much as he pleases, since this he may do without offending Nature, to ridding himself of the children he is unable to feed, or to whom the government cannot look for assistance; in the same way, grant him the right to rid himself, **at his own risk and peril,** (23) of all enemies capable of harming him, because the result of all these acts, in themselves of perfect inconsequence, will be to keep your population at a moderate size, and never large enough to overthrow your regime. Let the monarchists say a State is great only by reason of its extreme population: this State will forever be poor, if its population surpasses the means by which it can subsist, and it will flourish always if, kept trimly within its proper limits, it can make traffic of its superfluity. Do you not prune the tree when it has over many branches? and do not too many shoots weaken the trunk? Any system which deviates from these principles is an extravagance whose abuses would conduct us directly to the total subversion of the edifice we have just raised with so much trouble; but it is not at the moment the man reaches maturity one must destroy him in order to reduce population. It is unjust to cut short the days of a well-shaped

person; it is not unjust, I say, to prevent the arrival in the world of a being who will certainly be useless to it. The human species must be purged from the cradle; what you foresee as useless to society is what must be stricken out of it; there you have the only reasonable means to the diminishment of a population, whose excessive size is, as we have just proven, the source of certain trouble.

The time has come to sum up.

Must murder be repressed by murder? Surely not. Let us never impose any other penalty upon the murderer than the one he may risk from the vengeance of the friends or family of him he has killed. (24) "I grant you pardon," said Louis XV to Charolais who, to divert himself, had just killed a man; "but I also pardon whoever will kill you." All the bases of the law against murderers may be found in that sublime motto. (The Salic Law only punished murder by exacting a simple fine, and as the guilty one easily found ways to avoid payment, Childebert, king of Austrasia, decreed, in a writ published at Cologne, the death penalty, not against the murderer, but against him who would shirk the murderer's fine. Ripuarian Law similarly ordained no more against this act than a fine proportionate to the individual killed. A priest was extremely costly: a leaden tunic, cut to his measurements, was tailored for the assassin, and he was obliged to produce the equivalent of this tunic's weight in gold; in default of which the guilty one and his family remained slaves of the Church.)

Briefly, murder is a horror, but an often necessary horror, never criminal, which it is essential to tolerate in a republican State. I have made it clear the entire universe has given an example of it; but ought it be considered a deed to be punished by death? They

who respond to the following dilemma will have answered the question: Is it or is it not a crime?

If it is not, why make laws for its punishment? And if it is, by what barbarous logic do you, to punish it, duplicate it by another crime?

We have now but to speak of man's duties toward himself. As the philosopher only adopts such duties in the measure they conduce to his pleasure or to his preservation, it is futile to recommend their practice to him, still more futile to threaten him with penalties if he fails to adopt them.

The only offence of this order man can commit is suicide. I will not bother demonstrating here the imbecility of the people who make of this act a crime; those who might have any doubts upon the matter are referred to Rousseau's famous letter. Nearly all early governments, through policy or religion, authorized suicide. Before the Areopagites, the Athenians explained their reasons for self-destruction; then they stabbed themselves. Every Greek government tolerated suicide; it entered into the ancient legislators' scheme; one killed oneself in public, and one made of one's death a spectacle of magnificence.

The Roman Republic encouraged suicide; those so greatly celebrated instances of devotion to country were nothing other than suicides. When Rome was taken by the Gauls, the most illustrious senators consecrated themselves to death; as we imitate that spirit, we adopt the same virtues. During the campaign of 1792, a soldier, grief-stricken to find himself unable to follow his comrades to the Jemappes affair, took his own life.

Keeping ourselves at all times to the high standard of those proud republicans, we will soon surpass their virtue: it is the government that makes the man. Accustomed for so long to despotism, our courage was utterly crippled; despotism depraved our manners; we are being reborn; it will shortly be seen of what sublime actions the French genius and character are capable when they are free; let us maintain, at the price of our fortunes and our lives, this liberty which has already cost us so many victims, of whom we regret not one if we attain our objective; every one of them sacrificed himself **voluntarily**; (25) let us not permit their blood to have been shed in vain; but **union**... (25) union, or we will lose the fruit of all our struggles. Upon the victories we have just achieved let us seat excellent laws; our former legislators, still slaves of the despot we have just slaughtered, had given us nothing, but laws worthy of that tyrant they continued to reverence: let us re-do their work, let us consider that it is at last for republicans we are going to labour; **may our laws be gentle, like the people they must rule.** (3)

In pointing out, as I have just done, the nullity, the indifference of an infinite number of actions our ancestors, seduced by a false religion, beheld as criminal, I reduce our labour to very little. Let us create few laws, but let them be good; rather than multiplying hindrances, it is purely a question of giving an indestructible quality to the law we employ, of seeing to it that the laws we promulgate have, as ends, nothing but the citizen's tranquillity, his happiness, and the glory of the republic. But, Frenchmen, after having driven the enemy from your lands, I should not like your zeal to broadcast your principles to lead you further afield; it is only with fire and steel you will be able to carry them to the four corners of the earth. Before taking upon yourselves such resolutions, remember the unsuccess of the crusades. When the enemy will have fled across the

Rhine, heed me, guard your frontiers, and stay at home behind them. Revive your trade, restore energy and markets to your manufacturing; cause your arts to flourish again, encourage agriculture, both so necessary in a government such as yours, and whose aim must be to provide for everyone without standing in need of anyone. Leave the thrones of Europe to crumble of themselves: your example, your prosperity will soon send them flying, without your having to meddle in the business at all. (26)

Invincible within, and by your administration and your laws a model to every race, there will not be a single government which will not strive to imitate you, not one which will not be honoured by your alliance; but if, for the vainglory of establishing your principles outside your country, you neglect to care for your own felicity at home, despotism, which is no more than asleep, will awake, you will be rent by intestine disorder, you will have exhausted your monies and your soldiers, and all that, all that to return to kiss the manacles the tyrants, who will have subjugated you during your absence, will impose upon you; all you desire may be wrought without leaving your home: let other people observe you happy, and they will rush to happiness by the same road you have traced for them. (27) (Let it be remembered that foreign warfare was never proposed save by the infamous Dumouriez.)

#### COMMENTARY

1. My comments begin in reference to the section of the pamphlet that is headed "manners". Sade has, by this point, already made the extended point that theism is in no way relevant or necessary to a republic (not least in that Church allies with monarchy to cement their cooperative and illegitimate temporal and moral power). He now wants to

argue that "French manners", by which he must mean contemporary French manners in general and not just in relation to this faction or that of the revolution, are equally unsuitable. This is important to note "for the laws to be promulgated will issue from manners". By "manners" here we should imagine not simply beliefs or values but habits of action and ways in which people habitually behave and relate. This, in fact, will become manifestly obvious in the things Le Marquis de Sade then goes on to say. What Sade wants to show here is that the habitual or customary manners, which have in the past been theistic and moral, are inferior to his own which he intends to introduce and argue in favour of.

The reason I note this in my commentary is because such an attitude accords entirely with my own belief, discussed at length elsewhere, to the end that it is by one's values and practices that one makes human society and so the world of human relationships. If one wants a different world of relationships from the one that one finds oneself in then it is by attending to these things – and changing them – that such a world of relationships will be remade. In articulating this point, Sade then indicates that this is both his point and intention too. He aims to change people's appreciation of themselves philosophically in order to change their relation of and to themselves politically.

2. Sade takes this point up in relation to an imaginary of a republican state without kings or religion (and their consequent imagined absolute authority). Here Sade relates freedoms of conscience and the press to an imagined third freedom, which he begs readers consider, of action. He conceives that in such a state, marked by liberty and equality (two of the three items in the French slogan, which originated in opaque circumstances in the early years of the revolution, "Liberté, égalité, fraternité"), crimes

will be consequently reduced as people reorient their relationships to each other in such terms. This comment, we must note, is exactly all about how people conceive of their relation to each other. Are we all free citizens or are we subjects? Are we constrained by moral absolutes or are we subject to the freedom of our individual conscience? Are we arranged in families or as a common fraternity of free human beings? It must surely be seen to make a difference and to matter if we live in “liberty and equality”.

3. Having argued that, historically, the duties of human beings have been related in three categories (towards a supreme being, towards “brethren”, and in respect of oneself), and swiftly despatching with the first category in light of his own total atheism in which no supreme being exists, Sade moves to the second, duties in respect of each other and which bind us to our fellows. It would be fair to say that, in regard to this category, there is a lot simultaneously going on in Sade’s mind.

First of all, he refuses the “sophistries” of “Christian morals” in this respect and which are summed up in the command to “love one’s brethren as oneself”. (The actual biblical command is to love one’s “neighbour” as oneself, a slightly broader category.)

Second, this Sade regards as “in defiance of the laws of Nature” which it is clear here he regards, somewhat perversely in regard of his total rejection of gods and morality, as something of an authority. This is demonstrated in that he writes Nature has “the sole voice which must direct all the actions of our life”. Why is the abstract invention “Nature” – which has no formal, material existence but is merely a human ideological union of the actions of the living environment *in toto* – is deserving of this unitary accolade Sade does not say. But he certainly here assumes it and, in doing so, may be charged with having

created a God substitute. Does “Nature” even have a “voice” (which, we must add, must be its own, independently generated voice)? It seems bizarre to suggest so. We may then begin to wonder if Nature, as Sade imagines it, actually exists.

Third, Sade urges us to regard others as brothers where this means “friends given us by Nature”. It is not exactly clear what this means at this point but the pamphlet speaks of “humanity, fraternity, benevolence” in the matter of reciprocal relations according to our own personal abilities (which are thought of as Nature’s individual endowments). It seems to involve not being overzealous in the blaming or punishing of others. (This includes a moratorium on the death penalty which Sade was against – and which he himself also escaped more than once, including during the revolution.)

Fourth, what Sade does seek to avoid is “universal laws” which, in his mind, create a “one size fits all” society but where it is obvious that we are not all one size, and so not all of the same temperament, at all. This is to be then regarded as Sade siding with the authenticity of individuality and personal liberty over the “palpable absurdity” and “terrible injustice” of universal laws. Sade in fact states plainly that “what is good for one is not at all good for another”. Sade himself imagines a situation of few laws and general leniency that is tolerant of individual differences and proclivities. Here again we can see the concept of Sade’s views of Nature behind this as Sade seems convinced that one person is made one way and another is made another – and what Nature has created no one should attempt to constrain.

4. Sade moves onto a section of his pamphlet where he reduces the offences against brethren to calumny, theft, impurity and murder. In addressing theft (he here argues for

why all of these are, in fact, not real crimes at all) he makes some, shall we say, audacious arguments. He argues, in fact, that theft requires “courage, strength, skill (and) tact” and says these are characteristics necessary to a republic. Further, he argues that theft redistributes wealth since it is normally those with less taking from those with more in most cases! Is this not then in line with a desire for “equality”? In a further intriguing point, Sade argues that this makes “the conservation of property” less secure which hints that property distribution itself is thus unjust. He goes onto to ask if, in a state about equality, it is just that someone with nothing be expected to respect someone with very much more. Such an agreement in fact only protects the one with much for the one with nothing has nothing to protect. It is, thus, not equal. Sade thus argues that oaths must bind all equally who must then all be already equal in order to be so bound. If not, why would the one with nothing care about equality in a state in which he was not equal? This, as Sade goes onto say, would not then be a pact among free people but would be “the weapon of the strong against the weak” and would be a means for the rich to enchain the poor. As a consequence, Sade argues that the thief should not be punished but, if anyone should, it should be the one who allows things to be stolen from them! In a further, concluding argument by appeal to his construction of Nature, Sade argues that theft is really only a human being responding to the natural requirement to preserve oneself. As a consequence, it should not be punished.

Sade fences around interesting principles here. He is right, of course, that there is no equality where there is no material equality. A state in which land is majority owned by nobility or the Church, by royal estates or private interests, is no equal state. Where a tenant must pay a landowner rent, or earn money from a boss, he is not free and is shackled to an economic and political relationship. Sade’s interesting arguments then do

have a point. Those arguments, however, also turn on the imagined natural right of the individual to preserve themselves and with this, too, I agree. Is it really a crime to want to survive and to take, if one must, from others in order to do so? We touch here on the principles by which states operate, something which, of course, incorporate which interests that state is going to protect, and not protect, in so doing. This was a live issue prior to, and during, the French Revolution in which diverse groups with their own interests vied for the power to protect them adequately, supplying their needs and wants in the process. Sade here clearly says that, at the level of the individual, Nature drives one to provide for oneself and to survive – making this an unpunishable offence.

5. Uniquely in the writings of Sade when it comes to matters political, we now come to sexual matters which are (most usually) of more moral import. The problem for us here is going to be that Sade does not recognise morality, most especially public and authoritative morality, as of any consequence at all. For him, it simply has no foundation, due to the absence of God, much as the argument posed by Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*. "If God does not exist, everything is permitted." He also has his failsafe arguments ready. How, for example, can the state expect the individual to be moral when the state itself, and of necessity, must be immoral (for example, in the matter of killing and war) in order to carry out its own duties as a state? Can the immoral actor insist that another actor must be moral where he is not? Can a murderer tell others not to kill (but they can) or a thief tell others not to steal (but they can)?

This is particularly pointed because the misdemeanours Sade seeks to excuse by such arguments (the "impurity" matters mentioned earlier) are sexual, namely "prostitution, incest, rape and sodomy". He describes these as "actions for whose undertaking

libertinage may be the cause" and these are actions which *Philosophy in the Boudoir* is entirely about, that book being about why personal sexual exploits and proclivities should be untrammelled by the moral weaknesses (or simply foibles) of others. This is the point where Sade, in both that book and this pamphlet as part of it, seems most cruel, heartless and selfish in that he demands the right to cause pain and feel pleasure regardless of the feelings of others (who, in fact, should often feel themselves obliged to submit to it). Here Sade argues that such "crimes" should be regarded as of no import to states for they do not affect them. States can also not effect their own vocation in the world by moral means anyway. Here he adds that states are, by the by, always themselves immoral in any case and so in no moral position to judge others. This, as is Sade's way, turns into an argument for why it is better for the individual to be immoral than to be moral with supposed historical examples. Sade conceives of this in the state's interest as states, republics, in his view must always be in a state of foment (which is not to be thought of as moral) which pushes them ever onwards. They must never imagine to settle into a state of permanent, settled morality for that is their inevitable doom. States, and so inevitably people, must always be in a state of permanent pragmatic insurrection. Here is one example of a place where I consequently hear echoes of Max Stirner making pleas for the rights of the egoistic owner and their own but, in Sade's case, to imagined social benefit as well.

6. Sade turns to an argument discussing prejudices human beings have but which Nature does not. One of these, for example, is a prejudice against nudity which is plainly stupid as all creatures are born naked and only one of them subsequently goes on to wear clothes (that being the most prejudiced one, of course). Sade thinks that obliterating such prejudices brings us back closer to Nature which, in his thinking, is a good thing.

However, he does continue to insist on talking about “Nature’s voice” which is something Nature doesn’t have. Nature doesn’t speak for itself and so, even if it had preferences, rules or laws, which it also doesn’t, it could never communicate them to us anyway. Sade often comes mightily close to saying – if he does not actually say – that Nature acts as some sort of warrant for actions and behaviours because it either enables or allows them and this is false thinking exactly because Nature does not speak and cannot be regarded as a warrant for any action as if it had an opinion. This is simply to anthropomorphise the natural conditions of our existence and to say that if I *can* do a thing then I *should be allowed* to do a thing. (For example, Sade justifies nudity and lust in this way and it is that he does it in this way that is the pre-eminent problem with the arguments.) This is most usually the case in relation to human passions which Sade thinks generally nature-born and so things human society has no right to control or restrict as, to do so, is to constrain Nature. Sade, instead and for example, thinks the state should be constructing buildings for libertines where they may fully indulge their passions to their fullest extent and where “absolute subordination” of some by others (which basically means of women by libertine men) may be carried out unhindered.

The problem is, in the republican context Sade has taken on for himself, that this would hardly be equal (or even particularly about liberty for all!). Sade conceives, in fact, that the libertine man is hardly to be distinguished from a despot in the throw of his passions. And so Sade argues that to constrain him on this point will eventually become a political problem for government since these passions will not just go away but must eventually find an outlet – a real world outlet rather than an outlet satiated in an arena of sexual play. This then raises the question of how many men, unsatiated in their desire for control and cruelty in their sexual play, instead take it out on others to real world effect?

I cannot answer that question but I can point out that Sade links the two in an argument which makes the point that it is better to satiate the passions in an imagined safe environment rather than to frustrate them and consequently risk them erupting in society wherever they will. Lust and tyranny can be confined to sexual arenas or they can be loosed upon people in more political ways - and which, Sade would then ask, is better for the republic in general? Thus does Sade argue that all wise rulers of the past catered for the tyrannical traits and passions of their societies by providing legitimate sexual outlets for them. None of this, of course, has anything to do with the morals of the situation for Nature speaks for itself and tells us what is empirically the case.

7. Now it gets really interesting for Sade wants to treat of the relations (natural, always imagined natural) between men and women. Here Sade argues that, in a state of Nature without and before marriage (which, in its possessive exclusivity, is unnatural), women were both their own kind and the property of all men. However, since Sade also conceives of people, women as well as men, as free beings, he needs to do more intellectual work here. Consequently, he regards the exclusive possession of a woman by a man (as in marriage at that time) as equal to slavery and so illegitimate ("never may there be granted to one sex the legitimate right to lay monopolising hands upon the other"). But, by the same token, and since Sade conceives that, in a state of Nature, all women were available to all men (since he thinks marriage the anti-Nature corruption here), this also means that women may not legitimately refuse male advances by claiming that they already have the attentions of another male. This is effectively to say that no woman may refuse a man who desires her. What is then restricted is permanent male possession of women and not temporary male use of them. Sade thus argues that all men have the right to make use of all women sexually ("I have the right to force from

her this enjoyment"), if temporarily, and considers that the fact he argues against their permanent possession by men is a point in their favour. Sade, of course, is not put off by the possible violence involved here for what could be more natural than the use of force? In fact, he even goes so far as to argue that, because men are in general physically stronger than women, they have the naturally endowed right to utilise that strength against them and to their advantage. Here a woman's moral rights to modesty or exclusivity of relationship with another are batted aside as empty, unnatural words and illusions dreamed up contrary to Nature's natural realities. Love is also disposed of where it is made the exclusive possession of two, and only two, people in order that Sade may argue that women exist quite naturally for the happiness of all men, the only illegality in this case being that men seek exclusive possession of any women so enjoyed. So natural does Sade imagine this that, in his imaginary republic he is urging on his fellow Frenchmen, he obliges all women to present themselves to the houses of prostitution he recommends to be built, there that they may be enjoyed by the general male populace as desired.

8. Now, of course, the question arises "To which females does this idea apply?" and the answer is frankly shocking. Sade argues that the male desire overrides all other concerns and since a man may, in theory, desire a female of any age, there can be no age restriction. Moreover, all females submitting to such an understanding and attending the imagined houses of prostitution will be required to indulge male desires "however strange or irregular they may be" since, for Sade, if you can imagine it then it must be natural – and so have Nature's seal of approval. These ideas, one may imagine, are shocking enough when stated in the abstract but one must remember that Sade is putting them forward, without humour or sarcasm, as matters of public policy and

politics. He can do this precisely because he believes that “there is no extravagance which is not in Nature, none which she does not acknowledge as her own.” And with morality, and moral authority, gone there is nothing to say otherwise. This is also, in fact, why he can go onto make the argument that a “right of enjoyment” overrides all other considerations. Sade is not blind to these considerations (such as the harm done to young girls being desired sexually by men); he just thinks those having them must submit to the prior consideration of male enjoyment instead.

9. But Sade would not leave those put in this position without any consolation whatsoever; and so he attempts to redress the balance. (Whether he would do this in a less public and political context is a moot point. Here, of course, he must seek to appease others perhaps much less libertine than himself.) Sade’s compensation to the females impacted by his previous ideas (which, of course, is all of them) is to grant them their own sexual freedom in return and without being bound to traditional notions of modesty or piety (or marriage, of course). Thus, such females may enjoy sexual relations with whomsoever they like (and without number) in whatever ways they see fit, Sade imagining this to be legislated for in much the same way as their submission to men who desire them will also be legislated.

This is one case, in fact, where Sade’s sexual-political imagination grants to women (and girls) more sexual freedom than was the case at the time and is, thus, a genuinely revolutionary idea. In fact, all his sexual ideas in the last three points I have made amount to a total restructuring of human sexual relations – in ways that make them publicly acknowledged and organised – thus changing the sexual basis of society as a whole. No more is marriage the fundamental male-female relationship. Instead, a much

more open sexual interaction is imagined and thought beneficial to society as a whole, morality's artificial constrictions and prisons for the sexuality of all of us having been cast aside. This is also not so simply "libertine" (liberally individualist) as it seems. If one reads a book such as the anthropological study *Sex At Down* by Christopher Ryan and Cacilda Jetha, for example, one soon realises that the Western, Christian-influenced conception of male-female relations, primarily organised according to an exclusive marriage, is merely a cultural curiosity and not simply the way of all things. In other places, as that book details at length, sexual relations are dealt with in myriad different ways – from marriage being construed as which bed you decide to sleep in to entire villages engaging in sexual rituals communally, any offspring resulting being regarded as communal responsibilities (see my next point below), to sex being entirely uncoupled from parental responsibility at all. In world terms, the sexual organisation of people is then not simply one and is never simply the same. Cultural particularities and peculiarities quite naturally abound, questioning the "morality" of any of them in the process outside of their own cultural milieus. This, of course, then puts the claims of "morality" itself firmly under the microscope, something of which Sade would heartily approve.

10. Sade, however, realises there will be complaints about his imagined scheme. All this random sexuality is bound, as one consequence, to end up in children being born. But Sade is now deep into his sexual reorganisation of society, which will go on for some pages more yet in his argument, and, thus, he must attempt to reason it out. He does so in remarkable ways, in this case arguing that children are really not the possessions of their progenitors but children of their countries. Indeed, Sade (who elsewhere in *Philosophy in the Boudoir* is pro-abortion and imagines sex as for pleasure not

reproduction) argues here that this is the only way for a republic to deal with such an issue since he regards closed families as possible hotbeds of prejudice or contention. Instead, children should be cared for by a wider community of the state. This is obviously quite a revolutionary idea but not, I think, so far removed from those other cultures already extant where all adults regard all children as their own or where paternity is not a primary concern (see *Sex At Dawn* once more for details on this). We must also consider that a hundred years later the anarchist and feminist Emma Goldman, for different reasons to be sure, would also be espousing ideas on the communal care of children brought up to be free and independent citizens in their own right rather than as familial clones under the constraint of controlling parents. This idea is, then, not exactly novel or of isolated expression and is an authentically different vision of human relations.

11. In imagining how his libertine politics may work out, Sade, who has abolished marriage and family constraint in doing so, imagines a sexuality set free. (It will, of course, be noted that, at least in the Christianised West of Sade's experience, it is morality, and moral authorities such as the Church, which have most sought to constrain and, indeed, censure and control, human sexuality.) So Sade berates that mentality which identifies honour and virtue with resistance to desires Nature plants within us and which is most often called moral – as if “moral” was a thing one must be. He thus imagines children being allowed to become naturally sexual beings as these feelings are stimulated by Nature herself and resistance to them as an unnatural response. Besides, Sade reminds us, since possessive marriage has now been outlawed by him, no one has anything to save themselves for. (Here Sade makes clear that in his republic marriage would indeed be completely abolished.) Thus, in the appropriate buildings Sade has designated as houses of prostitution, the young as well as the old would be able to give

free reign to their desires, imagined called forth by Nature, to their heart's content. (Sade calls these "all the pleasures of which Nature makes a duty".) Sade thus encourages particularly girls to engage with their nascent sexuality in poetic fashion and urges upon the female that same liberty of spirit and desire he thinks the natural portion of men as well:

*"For a bridle have nothing but your inclinations, for laws only your desires, for morality Nature's alone; languish no longer under brutal prejudices which wither your charms and hold captive the divine impulses of your hearts;"*

Here the extent to which you embrace delinquencies, debaucheries and extravagances is equivalent to the amount of esteem you would receive in such a society.

12. It will be noted that, in despatching morality, Sade no longer seeks to justify anything on moral grounds. Indeed, moral grounds have been made unavailable to him and by him. One objecting to his arguments out of morality is regarded as out of bounds and so unable to bring any complaint on such a basis. This means that, in order to argue with Sade, one must attempt to do so on other grounds. (This is why he is arguing, for example, about the usefulness or relevance of things to a republican government in this pamphlet rather than simply arguing things are good or evil in their own right.) Here culture (and the book *Sex At Dawn* with its multi-cultural anthropological examples) plays a part again when he can regularly advert to various other cultures with different sexual and political practices (such as that of the wives and daughters of community members being offered to visiting strangers for their pleasure in some cultures) without them being regarded as criminal. Here Sade blames Christians for moralising behaviour

into crime and this argument stands as a general challenge to the idea that anything is simply “immoral” or that, even if it is, that should necessarily matter or mean anything to us at all in any sense other than practical or pragmatic ones (i.e. in that, if we take actions or display behaviours which others disdain, they may take actions against us as a consequence, actions and consequences we may wish to bear in mind).

But, of course, such arguments, valid as they may well be, require application to specific cases. And these cases can become hard cases when we are all in receipt of centuries of moral accumulation of ideas and attitudes. (Nietzsche, in fact, in his book *Daybreak*, regarded morality as little other than having your behaviour controlled by your ancestors.) Thus, when he turns to incest, the general argument bites in a specific way – and that even though he can once again advert to cultures where it is practised without criminal or immoral connotation. In such arguments, we find Sade praising “primitive” peoples as those close to Nature and so less tainted by civilisation’s distancing and corrupting consequences. Sade, in fact, goes onto argue that “every government whose basis is fraternity” should be in favour of incest and finds it a matter of “absurdity” that “reasonable men” can find anything objectionable in sex between two people of close family relation (which one should probably imagine, in this case, as preferably consensual or, at the very least, voluntary if possible – although, in the last resort, Sade would probably also argue in favour of a dominant figure’s pleasure too). Once more, Sade invokes Nature to his cause here when he argues that those for whom Nature gives us a sexual enjoyment human beings, with their prejudicial moral reasoning, should not obstruct, deny or criminalise. People, he imagines, should not allow themselves to become “bestialized by superstition” but use their reason free of morality’s corrupting effect.

13. One notable thing about Sade, in fact the most notable thing in my researches into his ideas, is his total lack of compromise regarding them. Where I, delicate flower that I now perhaps am, always expect some point of mitigation, some holding back from ultimate consequence, Sade seems to give none. This is so here too when he comes to the subject of rape. It should be remembered, of course, that Sade views the subject's pleasure as more important a matter to consider than the object's pain and so, perhaps, we should not be surprised. But this doesn't make it any less shocking to read. Sade, in fact, disregards rape as a crime so completely (regarding it as mere damaged property and so better than theft in which property is entirely stolen!) that he passes over it very quickly, arguing that, in an act of rape (conceived only as male upon female rape), the rapist only puts a woman in that condition which "marriage and love" soon would anyway. (In many cases marriage was viewed as the husband having complete sexual rights in regard to his wife, rape then being an impossibility in terms of it being a crime.) Sade thus demonstrates that he barely shows any concern for the concerns of the one being raped at all. Perhaps he imagines that his earlier ideas, in which women should consent to submit to any man's desire in any case, put things on a better footing to begin with.

14. Another sexual act Sade considers is sodomy (anal sex) which, in fact, happened to be Sade's own favourite sexual practice (and with men not women). Unfortunately for Sade, it was in the France of his day completely illegal and attracted the death penalty which, even if the act itself disgusts you, seems a little harsh where its practise might be entirely consensual and done with agency on the part of all parties concerned. Sade thus wonders at the logic of condemning people to death for not sharing your sexual tastes. (A point which would, of course, apply to other sexual practices as well.) Nature, of

course, does not abjure it for it is Nature which not only makes it possible but enjoyable. Furthermore, Sade argues that the body cannot be thought to have sexual and non-sexual parts. A body is just a body and what uses or enjoyments its parts may find are separate issues. In fact, the only possible crime Sade can even imagine here is waste of semen if thinking sex is meant to be reproductive alone but there Sade reasons that, if semen were so precious, Nature would have found a way not to waste any.

Sade, however, who does not think sex was created for reproduction alone but for pleasure, disdains such reproductively biased arguments noting, for example, that men “waste” their semen even in dreams which Nature provides – so there can hardly be a desire within Nature to preserve it. Nature, thinks Sade, would not make possible anything that outraged it. (Although, of course, as we have already had several occasions to mention, Nature cannot itself be outraged. It has no opinions on anything.) Sade thus goes onto argue that all inclinations and tastes, primarily here sexual, of course, exist in us due to Nature and that none of this can then be offensive using such a measure. Sade, in fact, argues, that the body's natural formation, which was nothing to do with human design, is what inspires the desire for anal sex – and can we imagine that he is wrong in thinking this? Our only issue here, it would seem, is in considering if naturally arising ideas are then thought Nature's obligations or whether they are matters to be considered in other ways. Sade clearly thinks that sodomy serves natural purposes. This does not make it compulsory but neither does it say it should be forbidden as an abomination either.

15. Sade goes onto argue for sodomy as both natural and useful to a republic – citing Greek and Roman examples with favour. Since he regards it as entirely natural, he argues

human beings must respect Nature's judgment in the matter – although, of course, Nature does not judge at all and is merely an environment or interlocking set of physical conditions. Here, however, it is interesting that Sade argues that male-male relationships (which we should not anachronistically imagine as "homosexual" since such a concept more properly belongs to the 1860s and beyond), sexually conceived, produced solidarity and loyalty amongst those involved in them, suggesting that the organising of sexuality has political effects and consequences. This is a very interesting suggestion which we see reinforced in various constructions of sexual relationships around the world. How sex mediates relationships has a large effect on how those within societies politically relate to each other and so are themselves constituted. Sade himself seems to realise this too and it is notable of his works, no less of *Philosophy in the Boudoir* which is of relevance here, that all of his characters seem to present as pansexual, making sexuality a matter of all for all. It is the suggestion here that this is a political and not just a sexual preference.

16. Sade finally states plainly at this point that "perversions" (to be thought of as deviations from an unimaginative mainstream normal practice that has been morally determined) are constitutional in the human being and "inseparable from physical structure". This being the case, it cannot be a matter of "guilt" in any in whom they are found any more than a physical disability or deformity could be blamed on the one evidencing it. Sade thus clearly argues that those evidencing such perversions were, in the words of Lady Gaga, "born this way". The only thing of note in this respect is then that Sade has included tendencies to things regarded as crimes (rape, incest, sodomy) in this category. Interestingly, some of these are now judged less criminal in the West than

others which suggests, at the very least, that these are matters of opinion and not cold, hard, unchangeable fact - and much less an arbitrating moral world reality.

17. In the category of crimes against brethren, which Sade has been discussing, we come now to his last which is "murder". If we are, by now, familiar with Sade's rhetorical technique we may expect what is coming since who habitually murders more than a state? The France of the 1790s, moreover, was replete with judicial and extra-judicial murders so we can imagine that Sade can hardly have been against it, right? Sade does, in fact, begin by saying that murder is the worst crime of human being against human being since, of course, it deprives someone of their life. This aside, however, Sade wants to investigate if murder is actually criminal (both in itself and as a matter of politics), whether it materially harms society, whether murderers can tell others not to murder and, finally, what attitude republicans should have towards it. Sade, moreover, recognises that his answers may appear bold but claims a right "to say anything".

Consequently, he lays out an interesting and quite remarkable argument (against a Christian cultural background) for the lack of supremacy of human beings who are, as living beings, as other animals and even plants. We, like them, are simply products of Nature with life spans and physical faculties and attributes. Sade, in fact, goes so far down this path that he argues that he cannot find "any grounds for discrimination" between humans, animals and plants. Any who do, thinks Sade, simply display an inappropriate pride in their own species. This pride Sade deems "absurd". The point here, of course, is that plants and animals die, and are killed, in their numberless thousands day after day. Do any of us care? Really not that much. And so the point is made: if these other things – which we cannot discriminate against in regard to ourselves – die without

our concern then what does it matter if we kill each other in the same way? Logic, this logic, demands it should not.

18. Sade's point here develops. It becomes an argument that life is, in nothing, nothing at all, eternal. So in murder no one is taking away anything given as an absolute gift. It is, rather, simply the bringing forward of a certain outcome: the end of a life. Sade puts this slightly differently, pointing out that destruction is, in fact, a law of Nature. This develops into a philosophical reflection on Nature's manner of operation in that the natural world, by processes of indistinguishable decay, destruction and creation, is constantly transmuting and transforming itself. Looked at this way, nothing has the individual integrity a human being, subjectively self-regarded, imagines of itself. We are, to put it this way, simply brief blips in time in the history of some matter and energy (as is all life which cannot then, in Sade's thinking, be "destroyed" but is simply caused to change). Life is then all equally mundane and death is then but "a change of form" or "an imperceptible passage from one existence to another". Understood this way, Sade suggests that murder, an act of destruction, cannot be a crime for it, too, is simply just another act in accordance with Nature. (Here we may reflect that if Sade can imagine rape "natural" or "constitutional" then why would he argue any the less that murder wasn't too?) Sade thus imagines all these passions, naturally gifted and constitutional within the human physique, roiling around within us and, if in accordance with natural principles, things for which none of us can be blamed. He has, in fact, attempted to cover murder from two angles here; first arguing that we are as insignificant in ourselves as any plant or animal (about which we do not care), he then argues that destruction is simply natural in any case. Of course, here the moralist would argue that murder is

*morally* wrong. But that is exactly what Sade cannot and will not do. So one is left to object, if one wants to, on other grounds if one can imagine them.

19. Is one form of life more useful than another? Who could possibly say? Certainly none of this reasoning establishes a criminality in the destruction of any life (between which Sade has argued we cannot discriminate anyway). Sade thus draws his inevitable conclusion: homicide is following Nature's own impulses to destruction. Murder to Sade is essentially as a plague or a famine, a consequence of natural processes, a view possible when one has said the claims of morality are inadmissible in the court of rationality. It is a short walk from here indeed to the view that murder serves Nature's purposes, which Sade also suggests. It also, he notes, serves political ones and here Sade can make use of the myriad human hypocrisies about when, and when not, death is an appropriate political instrument. Obviously, Sade can point out immediately that the French republic he was writing in and to existed because of murder. What political state, in fact, does not exist because of it? What political state does not sanction it? (I have, of course, even read modern anarchist tracts where death to outsiders or recalcitrant insiders is expressly sanctioned.) States in fact raise military forces to commit sanctioned killings on their behalf and often these result in more accidental ones which they don't overly shed too many tears about either. Even civil police forces occasionally kill (or even murder) people and some states make laws excusing such legal officers from any criminality in such cases, indemnifying them against prosecution as a result. Are these the acts of those who care about murder or the imagined sacredness of human life? No, when it comes to politics the only rule is whether it is a murder of which we approve or a murder of which we do not approve. There is no absolute political principle against murder.

20. Sade consequently argues that a republican state should not disdain or discredit murder at all, not least because, as a state which began in murder (the French republic, of course, eventually murdered Louis XVI, as well as several others such as Marie Antoinette, as enemies of the state), it must continue in it if it would not fall into becoming a pacific state which Sade interprets as one fallen prey to political and social inertia. Murder Sade then imagines as something of a lifeblood of the state, a vital energy that must not be lost. He conceives of this consciously by physical analogy and imagines that such physical metaphors may be morally interpreted.

21. Of course, there is a further argument in relation to murder that we have seen elsewhere in this pamphlet before. This is that murderers are clearly warlike people possessed of some personal dynamism, if not to say courage, and such people will undoubtedly be of use to a republic. This can develop into a Sadean point that the strong must be preserved and the weak got rid of and to references to cultures and places where parents immolate, kill or destroy their weakling children rather than preserve their lives. Here Sade disdains social movements and expenses which preserve the lives of those that are publicly or economically useless, seeing no pragmatic benefit in the expense or effort to do so for a general polity. He even goes so far as to say that such people have "no right to live" and suggests "the best thing for all concerned" ("all" concerned?) is to dispose of them as soon as possible. Of course, here moral arguments about the value of an individual life are inadmissible. Utility and pragmatism, from a republic's point of view, are here Sade's sole concern.

22. Sade, however, also has a residual concern for "overpopulation" – as some still do today as well – since France's quickly rising population, which had multiplied several

times over in the eighteenth century, was a factor in why so many could not find work or buy food. Such fanatics about overpopulation, however, always seem to imagine it must be someone else who must die for the greater good and never they themselves or their own. Sade bids the state watch this matter though and pay attention to an ever rising number of people to whom he grants the right of murder.

23. Now in relation to this murder Sade makes an important caveat we must devote some attention to. Sade, as we have seen, has no interest at all in any imagined immorality in regard to murder. (If he did, he would probably see its immorality as its further recommendation!) Such murder, then, is done on one's own recognisance or, as Sade puts it, "at his own risk and peril". What is important in this is that it imagines human actions and behaviours done pragmatically and according to a logic of actions and consequences. In attempting to murder someone, for example, one may risk one's own life, for, in even the most extensively planned out cases, the unknown or unforeseeable may always happen. You may, in fact, not murder your target but they might injure or even kill you in the execution of it. Then there is the issue that, having committed your act of murder, others, friends or associates of the murdered, identifying you as the culprit, pursue you (even unto death) for the crime. This consequential, pragmatic reasoning appears to be the basis of Sade's republic understood in terms of the actions of individual human beings which he seems to regard as the actual motive force in society and so the political life force of human association. Thus, it is a pragmatic, consequential society that he imagines made up of motivated, passionate human beings that should not be morally constrained in these regards. Sade, in fact, would ideally like to restrict membership of his republic to such motivated, passionate and dynamic people

and seems to regard any others as useless to it ("what you foresee as useless to society is what must be stricken out of it").

24. Consequently, Sade argues for a republic where people are left to the consequences of their pragmatic actions (clearly these are both foreseeable and not foreseeable) rather than one where the act of murder itself is singled out and punished as a crime. Thus, you are free to murder at will – subject to you still being alive to carry on with it!

25. We are now into Sade's summing up of matters and he rises to patriotic rhetoric that is targeted against the political despotism of monarchy. This, summing up the attitudes and beliefs he has enunciated earlier in the pamphlet, he puts down to freedom, voluntariness of action and union of interests. These are interesting values for the anarchist - for they are theirs. Hence, we see that his earlier (and now repeated) plea for "gentle laws" which do not unduly restrict, bind or judge individuals is certainly part of his imaginary of an effective republican polity.

26. In continuing, Sade counsels against the foreign wars that republican France got dragged into in this period of her history, often at the urging of French nobility who, fleeing abroad, urged their noble brethren in other lands to fight on behalf of nobility everywhere by bringing republican France to its knees and restoring the privileges they were formally used to. Sade, however, argues for a different course. He suggests that France should worry about itself and its own prosperity and leave others to crumble or prosper as they will, imagining that a successful example will be its own recommendation to others elsewhere. This, once more, is a very pragmatic, very self-responsible course to take, reminiscent, for example, of the egoist anarchist. It is, in fact,

to make a choice in one's habitual existence between concern for one's own course or for that of all others as well. These choices will be seen to have vastly different consequences and requirements. In this case, Sade argues for a republic that acts more as a self-governing and self-concerned group of pirates than as an empire-building state.

27. As a consequence, and in the final point I want to note, Sade counsels to watch out for the enemies of the republic, so recently defeated, since, in his mind, they have not been permanently destroyed but are only sleeping. Sade proved right in this judgment as the Revolution was ultimately defeated and the republic itself overthrown. Perhaps the republic should then have been more concerned with itself as he suggested?

#### AN ANARCHIST INTERPRETATION

It falls to me to judge Sade, and his commentary in this political pamphlet, from an anarchist perspective, this perspective, of course, being my own version of such a thing for there is no one anarchist point of view. I will, in discussing my interpretation of Sade here, be doing so using values and ideas I have discussed at length elsewhere, primarily in my *magnum opus*, *Black Flag: Jolly Roger's Anarchy*. This is a 2,000 page book written over 7 years which discusses anarchy historically and philosophically, politically and economically, morally and intellectually. Readers can then have some confidence that my interaction with anarchy is not merely superficial and that this author has some insight into the subject. I have consequently decided to discuss the ideas in Sade's pamphlet under seven headings as follows:

##### 1. Atheism and Anti-authoritarianism

2. Judging Behaviour: Morality, Nature, Ethics, Pragmatism and "Actions and Consequences"
3. Personal Freedoms and the Coercion of Others
4. What's Right for a Polity? What's Right for a Person?
5. The Fact of Culture and Cultural Differences
6. The Political Consequences of Sexuality
7. Sade as Self-Organiser. Sade as Anarchist?

These, as will be seen, are broad topics which will necessarily involve synthesising Sade's thought in their interpretation. In doing so, I hope to both critique his ideas and clarify my own. And so I begin.

## 1. Atheism and Anti-authoritarianism

Sade obviously begins his pamphlet in militant atheist mood, providing several pages of atheist argument against the existence of gods and pointing out the political and moral dangers of those who believe in them as the absolute authorities they are imagined to be. This I take to be not just a point against the material and consequential existence of material deities but also against any absolute authorities of this kind. Such a conclusion in fact seems consequent on the remainder of Sade's views, not least in relation to personal desire and his wider political views in regard to soft touch government and against "universal laws" which do not take personal disposition into account. Sade, then, is against absolute authorities whether material, spiritual or moral and this is not something I intend to disagree with since it is an anarchist position too, "no gods, no masters" being a familiar anarchist slogan and one I have interpreted and

incorporated into my own anarchist articles of association as "Hold nothing sacred and, in so doing, destroy all authority". However, the fact that Sade holds this position is then consequent in terms of the rest of his views and opinions in that they cannot then be absolutes themselves. (This, as we will see in my next point, is a problem considering how Sade seems to view "Nature".)

I noted in my commentary in the previous section of this book that Sade basically views the desiring individual as the motive force of society. Thus, it is only natural that as a companion to this view would be views very much against overarching authorities which constrain said individual. It is not then surprising we find them here. (Some, of course, would simply argue that Sade writes in a self-serving way from start to finish. He knows what he personally wants to be able to do and so he writes to a pattern which would enable him to get it free of outside interference. We should always keep this interpretation in mind.) However, this does not mean his arguments are without force or logic. Do gods actually exist? Is morality anything other than fictional stipulations based on historic reasoning or opinion? Are absolute political or moral authorities socially desirable? Should any of these things (or their earth-bound champions or adherents) have authority over the desiring singularities that each sovereign human being is? No, I don't think they should. And so Sade is totally within his rights to begin his pamphlet declaring them phantoms that are out of bounds and means to politically and morally dominating whole societies. Such things help no one unless, that is, you mean "help to control them". Neither Sade nor the anarchist in general wants to be control and neither do they see social ideas or beliefs which are centrally controlling as a good social paradigm. Off with their heads!

## 2. Judging Behaviour: Morality, Nature, Ethics, Pragmatism and “Actions and Consequences”

Then, however, the question becomes how we can judge behaviour in a world without absolute authorities. There are two initial points here: first, it is not clear that Sade is not, in fact, using “Nature” as such an authority. The second point is to ask if “we”, at a societal level, need do such a thing anyway. Now on the second point Sade has pre-determined to operate in the conscious context of the French republic and this must necessarily colour his views (in that he must accept a political authority and its likely institutions). I, as an anarchist of the piratical kind, am not so controlled, however. I can simply be satisfied with the intersubjective agreement of such as I associate with or otherwise come to terms with, a major difference of context.

But let us continue on anyway, noting these differences. I note five ways of judging behaviour in reading Sade’s pamphlet so let’s detail each one in turn:

a. Morality. Morality we should think of as an overarching and customary code of behaviour and right practice imposed on people in a society from above and perhaps arbitrated by established and arbitrary institutions as well. Sade, thinking it in the gift of Gods, utterly rejects it – and I join him in doing so. Morality is a non-starter for lots of reasons but a major one will always be that none of us consented to it but neither does it require our consent. It is arbitrary and authoritarian.

b. Nature. As I remarked several times in my commentary above, Sade often seems to view Nature as an overarching (or perhaps simply constitutionally and constitutively

internal) reality in everybody's life – part of their material substance. He thus regards the way it operates as determinative (I don't think this too strong a word) in relation to the wants and desires of human beings. This, as we have seen, leads individual humans into controversial waters when such desires conflict with public morality. (This, in fact, is Sade's own problem which is why he writes books in prison.) The question is: what is "Nature" and can we think of it in the constitutive, determinative ways Sade does, regarding it as something with a "voice" to be heeded and its imagined warrants as things human beings do well not to artificially constrain?

Obviously, as my commentary above has hinted, I cannot say I go along with Sade here. That something is possible or imaginable never means you should do it. That one has an ability does not mean one is obligated to exercise it. Such things remain always and forever decidable on other grounds. Nature has no "voice" and neither does it have its own intelligence, conscience or opinion. It is simply an environment, a set of operating conditions, and that's it. If we want reasons to do or not do a thing we shall have to invent them for ourselves with the rationality it funded us with. Nature is neither a warrant nor a forbidding authority. Its not an authority at all. None of this, however, means that it isn't simultaneously a relevant context. An example here is exactly the nudity Sade brings up at one point. Nudity is "natural" and since "Nature" has no shame either then nudity isn't shameful either – at least, against the background of nature. Humans may still, amongst themselves, invent reasons for why, amongst themselves, they think it is (and some poor examples of them consequently do). But we are not constrained to agree with them. Nature, in my view, is then more a context than an authority (even if it is a desiring one, something Sade would himself highlight) and where Sade strays into the latter rather than the former then I judge him gone astray.

c. Ethics. I wish, in my anarchist way, to distinguish ethics from morality and the major way I wish to do that is by arguing that ethics are primarily designed by those who then intend to make use of them. This distinguishes ethics from morality immediately in that the latter is, by its nature, something more imposed and beyond those to whom it is imagined to apply. Morals come from above but ethics, so I wish to contend, come from within. Taking this definition and running with it, we can see that it applies, somewhat, to Sade who certainly has his own code as regards acceptable behaviours and practices – and likely one he would like others to freely accept for themselves. I do not think this is a bad thing in itself and even wish that so many more people were personally invested in how they, and everyone else, behaves. Anyone who has read my previous writing on this subject will know very well that I regard anarchism itself as an ethic or set of values (somewhat like a set of pirate articles of association which all joining the group must accept, with agency, for themselves) and that I do not regard such a thing as a set of rules so much as a personal (or, when intersubjectively applied, a communal) set of values by which one orientates oneself in and through life. Such things, I think, are both good and necessary, not least in that, in them, we take responsibility for ourselves (personally or intersubjectively) and own any consequences as a result.

#### d. Pragmatism

Ethics, however, are probably not enough, not least since other people exist who might not share yours. This is one reason why, going the republican state route, Sade argues that his ethics should be the ruling ethics. So much the better for him if they are, at least. An anarchist, however, does not have that option because an anarchist does not believe in republics or states, nor even in organising institutions or authorities. (At least, the

piratical kind I am does not. They believe in agency, autonomy and free association to form communities of affinity within a politically, morally and economically decentralised context: a form of self-organisation.) So this means that while “ethics” might be enough to guide us in our own lives and their most intimate relations they will not suffice unto all imaginable occasions. This is where pragmatism comes in for it bids someone to take a bigger picture into account than simply one’s wants or desires. It realises that each of us exists explicitly “in public” and so that more than “us” needs to be satisfied unless one is happy for one’s life to be permanent war. The imperatives of pragmatism are thus self-imposed constraints upon behaviour in the context of their own wider context and consequences. Pragmatism is all about not cutting off your nose to spite your face.

#### e. Actions and Consequences

The final thing I want to discuss here is something Sade sometimes makes use of himself as well as something not unrelated to pragmatism, of which it is itself an example: actions and consequences. In brief, this mentality is that one takes possible or potential consequences into account when one imagines, or before one carries out, an action. For example, if I attack or assault someone then I may need to take into account if they have powerful friends or allies, if I will get away with my assault, etc. Or perhaps I may wish to steal something. But will I get away with it? Can the theft be covered over? Might those from whom I have stolen come looking for it back? The mentality of actions and consequences then realises – fundamentally so – that all actions *do* have consequences and that these may quite reasonably and possibly be in serious and permanent ways. Once again, then, this is a context for action which looks beyond mere desire and places it in a wider social and political world it must also take account of.

My own attitude here is that all except the first of these five things is useful in terms of judging our own and others' behaviour – where this is necessary as it will be in more social and intersubjective situations than others. What is *verboten* here, however, is any concept of overarching morals, principles or laws, authorities which tell us, from themselves and in non-negotiable ways that do not seek our assent, what we can and cannot do. In this I agree with Sade entirely in what is finally a denial of any and all "gods", material or metaphorical. In his pamphlet, in fact, Sade opts for liberty (especially sexual liberty) as widely as possible but understands, albeit reluctantly, that in a republican context of a state he must be necessarily constrained by the concept of government, something I reject out of hand. The issue for both of us, then, is the one I will come to next: the matter of personal freedoms and the coercion of others.

### 3. Personal Freedoms and the Coercion of Others

Let me start here by saying that I, of course, reject Sade's nonsensical arguments about his pleasure overriding the pain, disfavour or even simply will of others. In this respect, the ending to *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, the book this pamphlet is presented within, is a particularly egregious (if consistent) example when Eugénie's innocent mother (although she is not imagined innocent in the text as she does not share the "manners" of the story's other characters) is sexually assaulted, raped by a syphilitic and then has her lower orifices sown up as a "punishment". In the immorality of this text that may serve as some sort of appropriate justice. But it is not my justice.

It is clear throughout Sade's text, in fact, even simply focusing on the pamphlet I have excerpted for study in this book, that he does have principles and ideas by which he

operates. For example, one appears to be that which regards men as superior to women (even to the extent that he regards anal sex with other men as the pre-eminent form of sex). This may seem patriarchal and misogynist in that he makes every female sexually available to every male – and perhaps it is – but the same Sade goes onto believe in abortion rights for women (in *Philosophy in the Boudoir* as a whole) and a right of sexual freedom for women to fulfil their own sexual desires without moral censure – entirely in the face of the moral precepts of the time, set around marriage and husbands' control of their wives as it was.

The question under consideration here, however, is a more general one of personal freedom versus social coercion and I do not imagine that this can be based in either sex or gender and so take a view even more (personally and socially) libertarian than Sade's own - which is itself considerably libertarian, both in historical and contemporary context. In short, whatever rights Sade gives a man I also give a woman (as I also give them to a non-adult as much as I give them to an adult, not forgetting Sade's arguments about the rights of children over and against their parents which are more evident in *Philosophy in the Boudoir* itself) and that includes a right of refusal to act in any situation in which they do not wish to partake. So, for me, there can be none of this Sadean nonsense about one's (or simply a man's) pleasure being an overriding concern. If anyone wants to sate their desire for pleasure then let them find people possessed of their own agency who wish to facilitate them in it. Agency+Autonomy+Free Association is the basis of my understanding of any and all social affairs, sexuality included. Or, as another of my "Articles of Jolly Roger's Anarchy" put it in my book *Black Flag*: "if something is not voluntary then it should not be done." This seems pretty clear and simple to me.

There is of course, however, a further issue here though, a particularly controversial one in an authoritarian world such as ours where everyone tries to accuse everyone else of "grooming" for perceived political advantage. Sade himself would probably have laughed at this because the book *Philosophy in the Boudoir* that we are here discussing a part of is a book that is entirely explicitly one in which the dramatic scene envisaged is that a 15 year old girl is groomed into a lifestyle of libertinage. Sade, of course, does not think there is anything wrong with this; he thinks Eugénie is simply getting an entirely appropriate education. Modern readers may nevertheless aver from his judgment. However, when that same book, in the pamphlet we are here considering, argues that its thoughts and stipulations apply *without age limit* we may need to look more closely.

In my own case, I think the same guidance as I have already given still applies – and exactly in things like agency, autonomy and free association and the article that "If something is not voluntary then it should not be done". I do not talk here about consent because, as I have written elsewhere, I regard it as a weak and coercible thing, something in which social pressure and the much discussed "power dynamics" can easily be brought to bear. Things like agency and autonomy, however, are much stronger concepts as well as being things that are constitutive of character and personality and, as such, are much less coercible things in social situations. This, to my mind, is the right way to go about activities which may have far-reaching consequences. If we are talking about sexuality primarily, as we are here (without it not also being applicable to other things), then we are, to my mind, explicitly talking about activities one chooses FROM ONESELF to opt into – and never about anything to which consent can, or could, be coerced. Sade tries to rig the logical debate about this and to turn the minds of the subservient to the advantage of the domineering. That, however, must not be allowed to succeed and each must be

fully informed and educated as to their own responsibility for themselves and their own inviolable agency and autonomy. In other words, if you are being expected to do anything then it must come from you specifically that you consequently do or don't do it. Anything else, to my mind, is an unacceptable coercion or exploitation.

#### 4. What's Right for a Polity? What's Right for a Person?

This is that topic under which people usually discuss "the rights of the individual" *vis-a-vis* the "rights of society" and here, again, I am somewhat at odds with Sade because I basically concede no "rights of society" since I do not think any pre-existing "society" which arbitrates its rights, and my responsibilities to it, over and against me deserves to exist. This makes me sound somewhat like the despicable British Conservative, Margaret "There's no such thing as society" Thatcher, but that wholly unsuitable comparison will have to stand regardless for I do not concede the rights of any "society" to which people themselves do not, with agency, freely consent. This means that, at birth, all states are equally illegitimate and all governments equally tyrannical over us. None of them have my assent and none of them seek my consent. They are simply all equally arbitrary authorities that seek to oppress me at their, and possibly their supporters', whim. Thus, "what is right for a polity" and "what is right for a person" may indeed be very different things. Another pirate-like article from *Black Flag* was "Self-organisation is our principle of life and anarchy described" and, that being so, my principle of human co-existence is not one of political authorities dictating terms to supine populations they govern by force. The trouble is that that is now how all populations are governed. (We may also note that "society" is a word describing a void. It has no content of its own. It is merely a

word for the connections of human individuals to each other. Thus, "society's rights" is a particularly empty concept, a nonentity and a total and utter misnomer.)

Sade's own view on this subject was weighted towards the individual – whom he wanted free to pursue personal desires – albeit he took this view in the context of a republic, thus requiring at least nominal government and the recognition that (in a top down, authoritarian frame of reference) someone must make the rules (and that they must be rules to be policed). But Sade makes a plea that these rules not be universal and draconian, urging that room for personal foibles be allowed. (It is not clear how this could work and Sade gives few clues in the pamphlet.) Sade wants the individual taken into account in the matter of a necessarily socially arbitrated government but it seems to me that this combination will always create conflicts for governments cannot possibly make a personally arbitrated set of rules for everyone (as Sade himself notes). They have neither the time nor the resources for this and are probably more concerned with those interests most impressed upon them by other concerns anyway.

My own view, released from the necessity of government, is different to this. Like Sade's view, my own view builds from the material reality of singular people who exist as separate entities yet who do so in socially associative formations. Whereas states begin from above, however, in a hierarchical concept of social organisation, I begin from below and state that no polity is a legitimate polity that is not formed and maintained wholly by those in association who create it. What a polity then needs is the means to survive as such and this is entirely a matter of the associations and intersubjective agreements that make it up. I envisage this as a conglomeration of point-to-point relations that are human relationships one with another. Without leaders, institutions or authorities. Why in this

way? Because I imagine that “what’s right for a person” is to have agency, autonomy and free association which allows them to create affinity relations which can supply their desires, needs and wants. Consequently, I imagine decentralised spaces to facilitate this free of the arbitrating control even the extremely desiring Sade still imagines politically necessary. It is notable, however, that wherever this is attempted authoritarian others (who believe in states, centralising authority and power over others) always try to destroy it. And so we end up in a conflict of states against people and “freedom” imagined as a thing related to control of others rather than freedom from such control. The issue is then, ultimately, whether you want to be free of such others as you want nothing to do with or whether you want to be free to control and coerce them. Using that distinction, we find that I and Sade are on different sides of the argument.

## 5. The Fact of Culture and Cultural Differences

A very interesting feature of Sade’s pamphlet is how many times he adverts to other cultures, times and places that are different from his own in order to give examples of people from elsewhere who organise their lives differently. He does this, of course, to show that we are not all the same and that what one people values (for example, centralised authority or sexual domination of men by women) another people may not – and *vice versa*. This has both a relativising and a de-moralising effect in that it questions the very idea of absolutes, which is likely something Sade would want to do anyway (outside of arguing those of Nature in his particular conception) as well as the basis on which any culturally-founded practice proceeds. In this, Sade actually makes a very important point for it is not an uncommon occurrence that people argue for their social reality as the *definitive* social reality. This, however, is of course never the case and is

simply a matter of culture, history, upbringing, tradition, contingency and similar things. Values and beliefs and practices have histories and while they may have been necessary, in that they have come to exist in time and space, this does not make them either universal or eternal. Therefore, in undermining the claims of culture generally by providing examples of others, Sade reminds us that, in some senses, everything we think and do is arbitrary, unnecessary, historically contingent and liable to be performed or acted out in other ways using other forms of social organisation or reality elsewhere or in changed circumstances. It is always only a matter of our choice or activity. In other words, Sade here highlights our agency in how we live and our autonomy in our ability to achieve it or transform it. And these are very good lessons to learn indeed.

## 6. The Political Consequences of Sexuality

The reason I ever began studying Le Marquis de Sade is because I wondered at his sexual imagination and its consequences having read the anthropological book *Sex At Dawn* (which I mentioned earlier in this book) which makes it quite clear that how a group of people organises their sex has far-reaching political effects. Indeed, it should seem manifestly obvious to the reflective person that how people can even imagine their sexual relationships must have wider consequences. Is it to take place in "pair-bonded" couples only, any other sex being considered taboo? Is it to be male-female only? Is it to be communal and promiscuous and found in social rituals? Is it to be something done in public or private? Are couples, or their subsequent lifetime coupling, to be regarded as anathema? Are people who have sex to be regarded as parents if a child should result or are there other people who are the designated parents in a given community? There are myriad questions we can ask here and each has consequences politically.

Sade's views here are a mixed bag. He clearly believes in sexual freedoms and, although he favours men over women here, he doesn't do so blindly and extends considerable freedoms to women that they don't even have now in many places. It's also notable, as previously mentioned, that seemingly every character in Sade (and certainly in *Philosophy in the Boudoir*) gets sex from everybody else. Sade's world is a pansexual, omnisexual paradise in which no coupling or combination is forbidden and in which someone's pleasure is always the point. Here, of course, taboos are also gleefully ignored and a sense of "openness to pleasure" is generally pervasive. It also has to be added here that although Sade does set out thinking which is coercive of women by men this is not his point of first resort. Even in his own real world indiscretions he sought out women who could procure others willing to partake and one does not pay people, as he did, who he intends to force anyway. So although Sade himself clearly hold some coercive beliefs, and was in his own life enthusiastic of enforcing them, he wasn't simply a monster who bypassed any voluntary agreements or mutual enjoyment at all. His ideal partner, indeed, would almost certainly have been one as willing and debauched as he himself imagined to be. And, in his Utopia, he would hope that everyone else would become this way too for his ideal appears to be a total sexual openness heretofore as yet undreamed of in a Western world mired in the sexual control of Christian influence for most of 2000 years.

This also applies to the concept of "family" about which Sade also has some fairly major things to say. Sade, in fact, appears no fan of either marriage or family and a major part of *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, the wider context for the pamphlet under discussion here, is about why Eugénie, a 15 year old trainee libertine, is under no obligation to obey her mother who stands in the book for the voice of irrational moralising and arbitrary

authority. (It turns out she actually wants to kill her, an ambition the characters in the book praise.) This leads Sade to talk about things like communal responsibility for children and their freedom from parental control. Here Sade is clearly straining Western cultural concepts of family polity and social organisation but he only really does so in the cause of individual freedom and doesn't contemplate the social consequences more fully. For social and political consequences there certainly are as in the case of certain matriarchal societies, for example, where sexual relationships and parenting duties are separated out at the social level, the female relatives of women who give birth, for example, being regarded as those who bring up children whilst the men do other socially useful things. In such places children have many mothers and the father is not nearly as important. In other places, a child may be thought to have multiple fathers as it is imagined every implantation of male seed goes to "make up a baby" inside the woman concerned. Thus, when the baby is born, the result of a woman's sex with perhaps many different men, anyone who had sex with the woman imagines that they have some part in the child thereafter produced. This is just two differing real world examples from *Sex At Dawn* of how other cultures organise their sex but there are many others. Again what Sade does here in questioning that one culturally dominant in his own time and place is made it seem as something contingent and changeable. Things don't have to be as they are. We can just act in other ways if we want to. The sky will not fall in if we do because elsewhere, where things are different, the sky has not fallen in there either.

Obviously, as one who has done some research into such things, I am well disposed to them. The relationships I write about in books about anarchism are not ones of control or coercion, such as Western concepts of marriage and family (not to mention sexuality – a whole other subject), have been. When one imagines relationships between people

who have agency and autonomy, who are free to associate with whomsoever, and for whatever reasons, they see fit (on the basis of affinity alone), one is absolutely not imagining traditional Western concepts of family or marriage - or of pair-bonded monogamous heteronormative couples. Sade wasn't doing that either and so in this specific area he has significantly deviated from the cultural expectation and norm of the time and place in which he lived. One imagines, however, that he did not join the dots here, as later anarchists did, in realising that a sexual revolution is simply a political revolution – for how you organise your sex is basically how you organise your society. Sade at least half stood for a self-organisation of this (whilst still acknowledging various hierarchies and a government). The anarchist goes much further than this, however, and so follows through on Sade's impulse for an omnisexual society of people of any sex and gender that are open to sex that flows from their own agency and that is not guided by authoritarian morals or by ancient institutions. Anarchist sexuality is political sexuality and flows from the anarchist principles I have now outlined several times already in my text. Such sexuality is not about control but, as in some measure Sade's was too, is about setting people free from sexual control in order to explore and enjoy their desires more fully, free from outside interferences as behaviour done in and from personal agency.

## 7. Sade as Self-Organiser. Sade as Anarchist?

In summing up all the commentary I have had to give about Sade's pamphlet in this book, it falls to me to ask about Sade's imagined political position as a whole. We can accept, I think, that it is a deliberately articulated one in which Sade is giving a side-eye to government fully conscious of his own desires and needs. Sade, let's not beat around the bush, imagines a government and a state that would operate in ways that would please

him. Let us not chide him too greatly for that, however, for which of us is not going to do the same thing? My sexual and political ideas that I have given here are certainly doing the same thing and I imagine yours would too for who wants to create a social state of existence that is personally upsetting to them? No one does for each imagines that polity which pleases themselves and preserves their interests. So, we may recognise that this is the case with Sade here too without letting that point derail what he actually has to say in terms of its content which may then be judged on its own merits.

In this respect, we may say that Sade seems to be travelling a path that is heading in the direction of some form of personal liberty beyond that he currently enjoyed but that he simultaneously can't think himself out of the political box of centralising control. Of course, this is also pragmatic as well for Sade was writing in prison where he had been put by officers of the French republic. It would hardly have helped his own cause if he had been writing, "Death to the republic, down with government!" What Sade does do, though, is argue strongly for personal freedom to facilitate ones desires (hopefully, but not ultimately necessarily, with willing associates) in a context of light touch government not overburdened with laws it wants to police and enforce in arbitrary ways onto every person within its territory. He talks, in the latter part of the pamphlet, about actions done voluntarily and the need for union between members of the republican polity as well as the necessity of freedom of action and acting in respect of one's own polity without necessarily worrying too much about looking for fights with that of others – and this is all to the good from my part of view. But, from my perspective, Sade is only then really on a journey to imagine a polity in which the libertinage he personally practised to the point of being imprisoned for it could be tolerated without being interfered with. Does Sade have genuine concern for the freedom of others? Perhaps only inasmuch as

he must concede it to others in order to acquire that needed for himself. Should we judge that harshly? Not necessarily, for the most coercive people are often those who insist on benevolence for everyone. Sade was much more a man concerned for and with himself and so he sets a certain example which is not to be ignored either: that one should mind one's own business and not stick one's nose into other people's too much.

So although Sade can be imagined as something of a pragmatic self-organiser who imagines and hopes for voluntary unions of freely associating people with whom the government will not interfere, he is still far from an anarchist. He is still, for example, far too ready to coerce others to satisfy his own personal pleasures. He also does not equalise all others in the freedoms he would hope for for himself (especially if one happens to be a woman). The more morally outrageous things he says (murder is fine, acting in lust is natural) I do not worry so much care about because I agree with Sade that morality is unjustifiable brain rot only of use to control others, a thing I want to wholeheartedly argue against in fact and in regard to all its means. We can find pragmatic and consequential reasons for why some of these things Sade says are objectionable (and "I don't want to do them" is certainly one that is good enough here regardless of Sade's own sophistries to the contrary) and we should always remind Sade that the will nature gave him is the same will it gave all others too. The question is then how a society of such people relates and although Sade puts forward interesting and, in some senses, very forward thinking (in Western context) social solutions here, we cannot imagine that he has thought about it in the round. Yet again, we must assume, he has asked "What suits me?" and then extrapolated from there. His pamphlet satisfies those to whom it is read out in *Philosophy in the Boudoir* but these characters are all Sade creations and so Sade surrogates. Those he has not created may defer from his views.